

THE Atlantic

MAY 2002

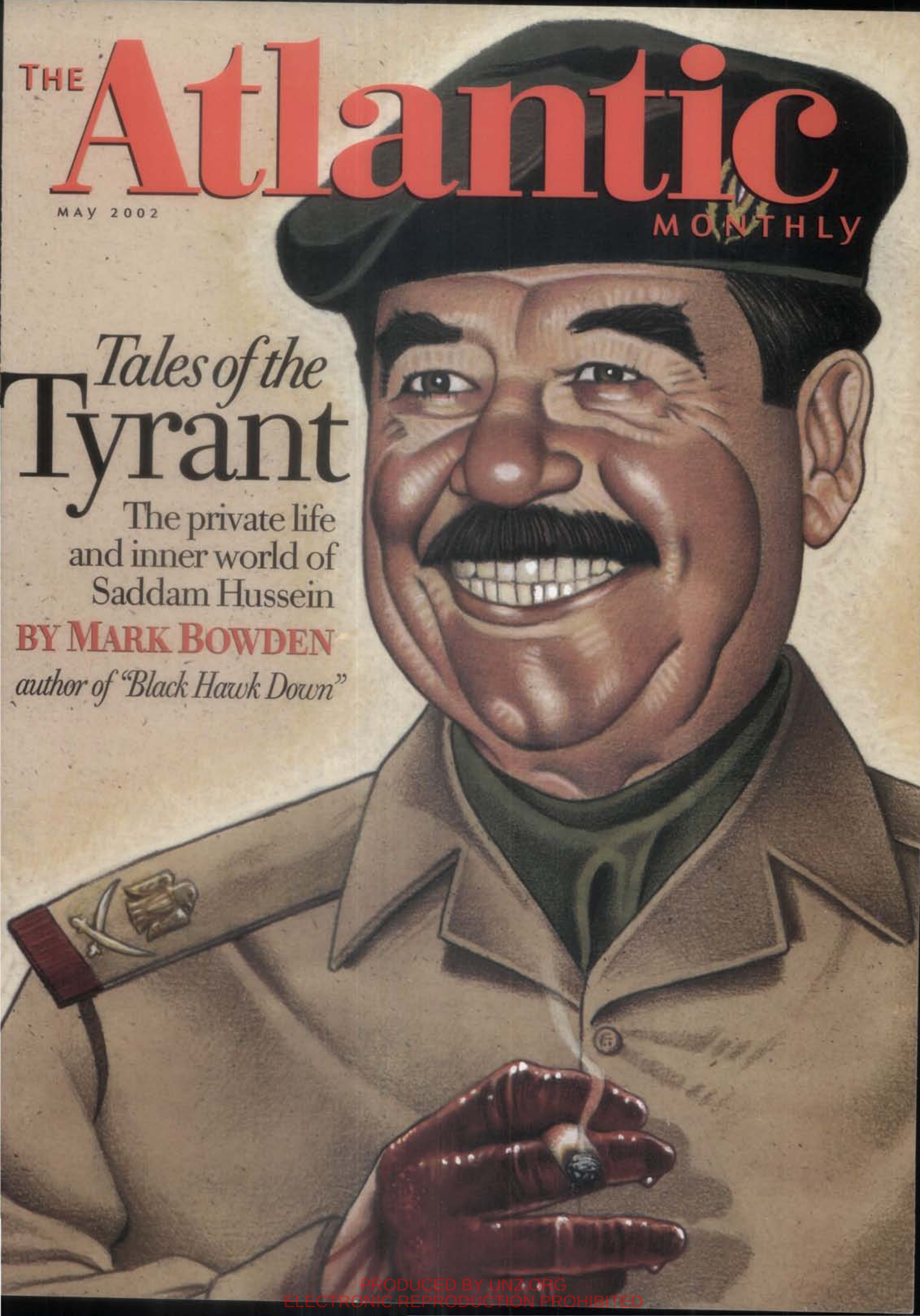
MONTHLY

Tales of the Tyrant

The private life
and inner world of
Saddam Hussein

BY MARK BOWDEN

author of "Black Hawk Down"



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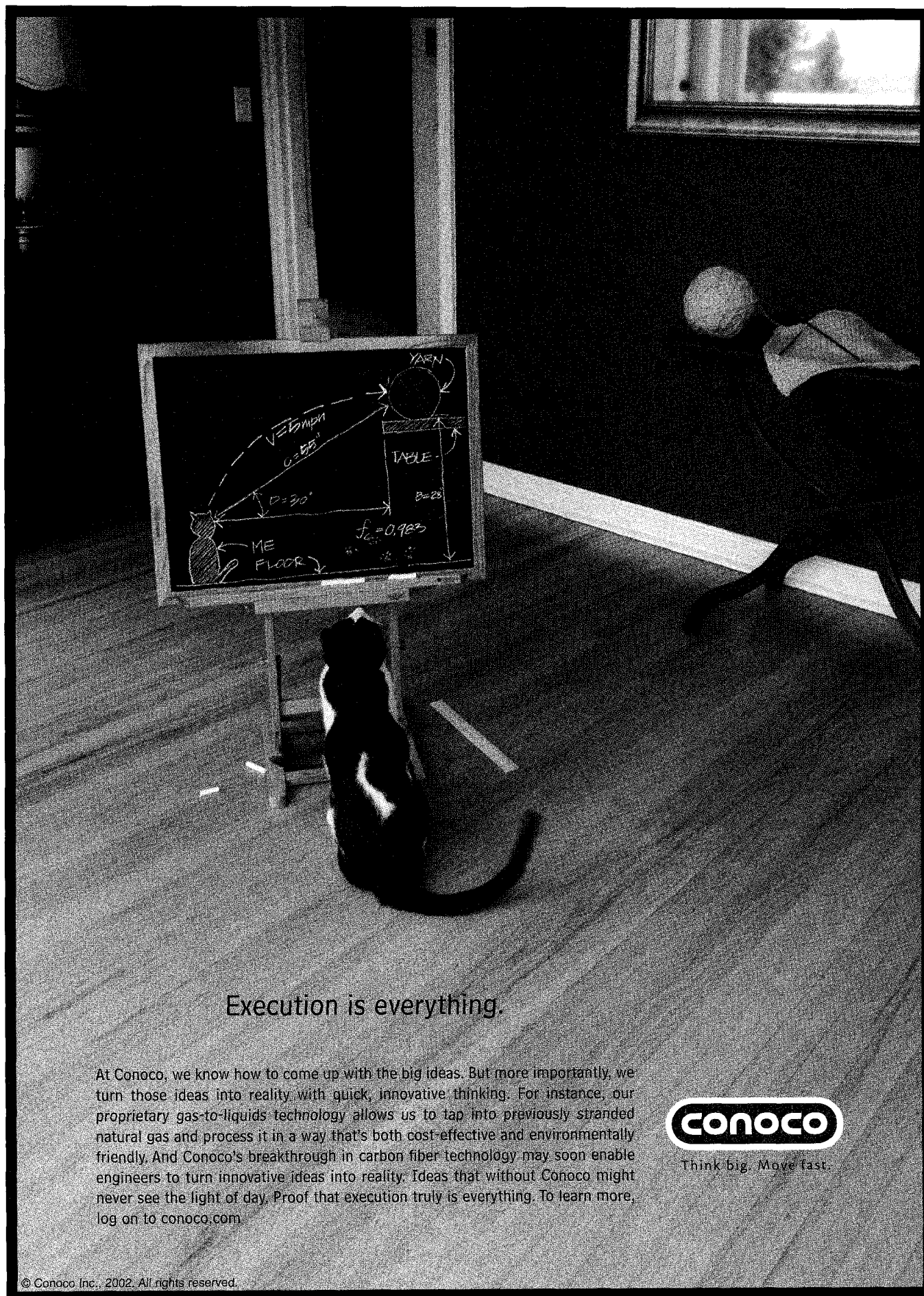
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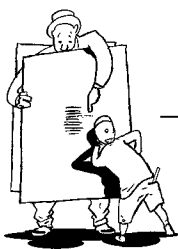
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Cover art by Bill Nelson; heading drawings throughout by Istvan Banyai



IN THIS ISSUE

He sleeps only four or five hours a night, keeps his desk immaculate, and tests all his food for poison. He is a fan of the *Godfather* movies and of Winston Churchill. Using information gleaned from extensive interviews with Iraqi exiles who knew Saddam Hussein well, **Mark Bowden** ("Tales of the Tyrant") provides an intimate and compelling account of the daily life of the Iraqi ruler and how he wields and retains power. Bowden is the author of *Black Hawk Down* (1999) and *Killing Pablo* (2001); he writes a weekly column for *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, where he was a reporter for twenty-two years. *Our Finest Day*, a book about D-Day for which Bowden wrote the text, was published last month. His nonfiction book *Finder's Keeper's* will be published in the fall.

James Earl Ray wrote hundreds of letters during the thirty years he spent in prison for the murder of Martin Luther King Jr. The letters have been obtained by Boston University's Mugar Memorial Library, where the Martin Luther King Jr. archive is also housed. **Douglas Brinkley** and **Anne Brinkley** ("Lawyers and Lizard-Heads") were the first outside scholars to examine them. Douglas Brinkley is the director of The Eisenhower Center for American Studies and a professor of history at the University of New Orleans. His most recent book is *Rosa Parks* (2000), a biography in the Penguin Lives series. He is also a co-editor, with Julian Bond, of the forthcoming *Portable Civil Rights Reader*. Anne Brinkley is at work on a book for children.

In a recent meeting with a genealogist **Steve Olson** ("The Royal We") discovered that he is a descendant of Nefertiti and Confucius—but then, so are we all, owing to the surprising mathematics of genealogy. Olson's book *Mapping Human History: Discovering the Past Through Our Genes* is being published this month.

Donald Hall ("New England Primer") is the author of numerous books of poetry, including *Without* (1998) and *The Painted Bed*, which was published last month.

This month in *The Agenda*: *The Atlantic's* editor, **Michael Kelly**, hails the maturity of air power; **David Brooks** asserts that character-building doesn't have to come from hardship; **Jonathan Rauch** shows how conservative homophobia has helped to undermine marriage and make cohabitation cool; **Jack Beatty** takes President Bush to task for spending the nation's inheritance; **Walter Kirn** explains how issuing national identity cards would fundamentally alter our national identity; **P. J. O'Rourke** puts forward a joint resolution (with Christopher Buckley) to institute a much needed regime of vote control; and **Stephen Glain** wonders why South Korea seems intent on keeping its most prominent North Korean defector under wraps.

Although **Richard Todd** ("Lost in the Magic Kingdom") "learned the lyrics to the Mouseketeer song when it was brand-new," only recently did he pay his first visit to Disney World, where between bouts of having fun he Had Thoughts. Todd, a former executive editor of *The Atlantic*, is at work on a book about authenticity in contemporary American life.

Cars introduced as the weather warms up tend to be more fun than cars introduced at other times of the year, writes **Thomas Hine** ("Spring Cars"). Hine, who helped to organize the traveling exhibition "U.S. Design: 1975–2000," currently at the Denver Art Museum, is the author of *Populuxe* (1986), *The Total Package* (1995), and *The Rise and Fall of the American Teenager* (1999). He has written a book about shopping, to be published in November.

The Newport Casino, home to the only public grass tennis courts in the country,

offers anyone a rare chance to experience the game in its most sublime form. **Marshall Jon Fisher** ("Tennis on the Green") has been a frequent contributor to *The Atlantic* since 1995, when he wrote about wooden tennis rackets.

Introducing people at parties is fraught with opportunities for spectacular gaffes, and **Mary Killen** ("Well Met") has some ideas about how to avoid them. Killen writes the "Your Problems Solved" column for *The Spectator*, in London, and the "Back-seat Driver" column for the British edition of *House & Garden*.

David Lodge ("Dickens Our Contemporary") reviews Jane Smiley's incisive Penguin Lives biography of Charles Dickens, the world's first literary celebrity. Lodge is the author of eleven novels, most recently *Thinks ...* (2001) and the novella *Home Truths* (1999). His new book, *Consciousness and the Novel: Connected Essays*, will be published in the fall.

Is there a more hilarious novel from the past half century than Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim*? **Christopher Hitchens** ("The Man of Feeling") thinks not. He writes for *Vanity Fair* and *The Nation*, and is the author of *Unacknowledged Legislation: Writers in the Public Sphere* (2000) and *The Trial of Henry Kissinger* (2001). His cover story in last month's *Atlantic* considered recent revisionist appraisals of Winston Churchill.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, Richard Nixon, much more than his immediate predecessors, shaped the civil-rights landscape that surrounds us today. **Tamar Jacoby** ("A Surprise, But Not a Success") reviews Dean Kotlowski's *Nixon's Civil Rights: Politics, Principle, and Policy*. Jacoby, a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute, is the author of *Someone Else's House: America's Unfinished Struggle for Integration* (1998).

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This month on the Web . . .

Mark Bowden

Bowden, a correspondent for *The Atlantic*, discusses "Tales of the Tyrant," his article in this month's issue.

From the Archives Charles Dickens in *The Atlantic* Monthly

A collection of writing by and about Dickens in *The Atlantic*, including an account by his secretary of Dickens's first trip to the United States, reminiscences by the *Atlantic* editor James T. Fields, a short story by Dickens, and contemporary reviews of his work.

Interview Steve Olson

A conversation about "The Royal We" and Olson's new book, *Mapping Human History: Discovering the Past Through Our Genes*. An excerpt, "The Genetic Archaeology of Race," ran in the April 2001 *Atlantic*.

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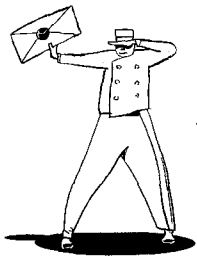
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

New Religions

Although I agree with Toby Lester ("Oh, Gods!" February *Atlantic*) that reports of the death of religion are greatly exaggerated, I am concerned about his dismissal of cult critics as ignorant and intolerant. He is turning a blind eye to the very real dangers of cults here and around the world.

Lester depends for his information on a particular group of "clubby" academics who purport to be experts on "new religious movements." They promote their careers by claiming that these movements are essentially benign, arguing that to question any religion violates fundamental human rights. Their willingness to ignore the dangers posed by destructive religious movements has real and negative consequences, contributing to a climate of unquestioning acceptance of any group that calls itself a religion.

Herbert L. Rosedale
Bonita Springs, Fla.

Toby Lester replies:

Herbert Rosedale has mischaracterized my article. I did not dismiss "cult critics" (his term, not mine) as either "ignorant" or "intolerant" (again, his terms). In fact, I deliberately avoided getting into the cult-anti-cult debate at all, because as far as I can tell, it inevitably boils down to unprovable judgments about what is true religion and what is not. Are some new religious movements less than savory? Of course, and we should watch out for them. But a major point I tried to make was that just about every new religious movement—including those that today have hundreds of millions of members—was initially dismissed as socially deviant. What interests me about the scholars of new religious movements is that they try to study what new movements are like, not whether the movements are socially acceptable.

Degrees of Evil

According to Ron Rosenbaum ("Degrees of Evil," February *Atlantic*), to credit Osama bin Laden with a belief in the rightness of his actions is, in effect, to excuse him of committing anything worse than "a well-meaning religious mistake." Rosenbaum gets it backward. Bin Laden's fanatical belief in the rightness of his actions lies at the very heart of his wickedness, because it blinds him to the moral reality of his victims.

Rosenbaum's view yields the comforting implication that we need only label bin Laden evil in order to guarantee that we don't share his wickedness, since we thereby show that we believe ourselves to be in the right, so that we can at worst be guilty of a well-meaning mistake. But if we apply this label with a fanaticism equal to his, we risk joining him in moral blindness.

J. David Velleman
Ann Arbor, Mich.

Ron Rosenbaum replies:

I'm tempted to say that J. David Velleman's "belief in the rightness of" his position, to use his words, "blinds him to the ... reality" of what I wrote. I neither seek nor find "comfort" in using evil as a label. What I sought to do in my essay was demystify a widely used label and examine the range of behaviors and mindsets to which it is applied. In addition, Mr. Velleman seems to suggest that all strongly held beliefs are necessarily deplorable fanaticism. Does this include the strongly held belief that mass murder is wrong, whatever you call it?

Baltic States

Jeffrey Tayler's weak case in "The Next Threat to NATO" (February *Atlantic*) is based on an anachronistic understanding of the geopolitical situation in Europe. His claim that "if NATO expands to

include the Baltic states, it risks acquiring a flash point for tension with Russia" suggests that Russia is likelier to take hostile action against Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia if they are members of NATO than if they are not. Does he really believe that Russia will risk a major war by invading member states? Leaving the Baltic states outside the alliance is much likelier to lead to military mischief.

Tayler erroneously refers to the Baltic states as "once Soviet republics" and as part of the Russian "Near Abroad." They are sovereign countries that were militarily occupied by the USSR from 1940 to 1991. Tayler's acceptance of an alleged need for a Russian Near Abroad is a Cold War anachronism that encourages Russian imperialism while ignoring the realities in the Eurasian continent.

He asserts that Baltic membership in NATO would pose "unsettling strategic risks for Russia." What risks? That a hostile Sweden or Denmark would invade Russia through the Baltic states? The Vikings ceased to be a threat to Novgorod centuries ago. With China to the east and Islamic fundamentalism to the south, Russia's northwestern borders with Estonia and Latvia are the most stable and least vulnerable borders it has. By extending its border with NATO, Russia increases its zone of secure, reliable, democratic neighbors.

Whereas Russia has been reluctant to expand cooperation and constructive ties with the Baltic states, it is pursuing such a policy with NATO. The conclusion is obvious. To improve relations with Russia, the Baltics need to join NATO.

Ojars Kalnins
Latvian Institute
Riga, Latvia

If Jeffrey Tayler's article opposing the Baltic states' membership in NATO represents the strongest case to be made against NATO enlargement, my confi-

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dence that Latvia will soon join the alliance has been increased. Most experts now acknowledge that the Baltic states are moving rapidly toward fulfilling all NATO-membership requirements, and will make dependable members of this important alliance. Baltic membership will not only provide security to the Baltic states but also enhance the common security of NATO members, especially those in the Baltic Sea region. Tayler's article offers a narrow, one-sided view of the real situation in the Baltic states and misrepresents the social situation inside Latvia in particular. His allegations of discrimination against Russian residents of Latvia have already been discounted by international human-rights organizations. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe recently closed its missions in Latvia and Estonia, further undercutting Tayler's misinformed arguments.

The old arguments about Russia's military interests, its Near Abroad, its 5,800 nuclear warheads, and its human-rights violations are as obsolete as the Cold War itself.

All three Baltic states will enhance the security of other NATO members and will add value to the alliance. This has already been demonstrated by the Baltic countries' support of the NATO-U.S. anti-terrorist campaign in Afghanistan and repeated participation in peacekeeping missions in Macedonia, Kosovo, Georgia, Albania, and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The Baltic states are ready to join NATO, will enhance the alliance, and will be exceptionally strong supporters of all the democratic principles for which NATO stands.

*Girts Valdis Kristovskis
Minister of Defense
Republic of Latvia
Riga, Latvia*

I strongly disagree with Jeffrey Tayler's conclusion that the Baltic states should be denied admission to NATO. Using his criterion for membership, that each new member should enhance the security of the present members, the Baltics pass the test. They already earmark two percent of GNP for defense, which is more than many existing members do. They contribute peacekeeping

troops under NATO command in Bosnia and Kosovo. They are doing their part in the war against global terrorism. Although the Baltic countries are not as large as many other NATO members, they are determined to share the burden of common defense and to play a constructive role in NATO. Despite the sentiments of unnamed Baltic Russians on which Tayler apparently based his conclusions, public-opinion polls conducted by independent organizations consistently show that a large majority of people in all three Baltic countries support NATO membership.

As for Russia, its President, Vladimir Putin, has said lately that sovereign countries have a right to select their alliances and that the Baltic countries' joining NATO would not constitute a threat to Russia. We should take him at his word.

*S. Algimantas Gecys
Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.
Huntingdon Valley, Pa.*

Jeffrey Tayler replies:

With all due respect to Ojars Kalnins, the Baltic countries were Soviet republics, if unwilling ones, and we have to face the demographic and strategic consequences of this. At issue is the security of the West.

Nowhere in my article do I suggest that Russia will "risk a major war by invading member states," as Kalnins implies. As I make clear, Baltic accession to NATO could set the stage for trouble with Russia, whose cooperation in security matters the West needs now more than ever. It would expose Russia to serious strategic risks: NATO would gain the potential to isolate the Kaliningrad military exclave and to deploy nuclear weapons within eighty-five miles of Saint Petersburg. I take Kalnins's farcical talk of Scandinavian Vikings as tacit, if unwitting, recognition of the incontrovertibility of these arguments. Furthermore, by admitting that Russia has been reluctant to cooperate with the Baltics, Kalnins, again unwittingly, supports my arguments by recognizing how sensitive Russians still are about territories they once ruled.

If concerns about Russian military interests and capabilities are "as obsolete as the Cold War itself," as Girts Valdis Kristovskis contends, then why are the Baltics pursuing NATO membership with such urgency? It is the Baltic Russians' perception of how they are being treated, not the opinions of the OSCE, that would constitute a problem for NATO

should the Baltics join the alliance. I repeat: human-rights violations are still an issue for Russians living in Estonia and Latvia.

The last round of NATO expansion (along with NATO's war against Yugoslavia) helped to turn Russian popular sentiment against the West and to bring (the nationalist) Putin to power, so it would be shortsighted for NATO to take Putin's recent pro-Western policies as evidence of a permanent Russian swing toward the West. In any case, since Putin's election Russian suspicion of the West has shown no signs of abating among the military and other large segments of the population—partly because NATO may expand into the Baltics. S. Algimantas Gecys asks us to take Putin at his word, but the Baltics clearly do not; hence their desire to join NATO.

The Professors Profess

Richard A. Posner's critique of my performance as a public intellectual enters the realm of self-parody ("The Professors Profess," February *Atlantic*). Judge Posner published two hasty books—on the Clinton impeachment and on *Bush v. Gore*—yet he condemns me as "hyperactive" in taking public positions on the opposite side in each matter. Posner is well known for writing on any subject that he considers important—from sexuality to literary criticism—regardless of its relationship to his specialty of law and economics. Yet he condemns me for writing an essay on anti-terrorism because I am "writing far outside [my] field."

In making this charge, Posner does not mention that I have written several books and articles on the legal aspects of international relations and comparative government. Nor does he assess the expert opinion supporting my caution against making the war on terrorism into an overextended and crisis-driven campaign—for example, the fine study recently published by Paul Pillar for The Brookings Institution. Posner's effort to refute my argument is fact-free and suggests an ignorance of the specialist literature—a characteristic failing, he tells us, of other public intellectuals.

But he is wrong to despise the breed. The distinctive flaw of American public life is anti-intellectualism, not the dominance of public intellectuals. Our politics

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is much enriched by scholars who dare to write for a general public, though particular human beings will, of course, make mistakes. By seeking to silence all public intellectuals other than himself, Judge Posner is pandering to the anti-intellectual prejudices of the crowd.

Bruce Ackerman

Sterling Professor of Law and Political Science

Yale University

New Haven, Conn.

Richard Posner demonstrates his own thesis: brilliant academics and esteemed judges tend to make lousy arguments outside their fields of expertise. He pulls one sentence each from paragraphs written by Professors Eric Foner and Thomas Laqueur and then derides the two for the “blather” that he himself has created. Readers who bother to look up Foner’s and Laqueur’s words in the *London Review of Books* (October 4, 2001) will find that in context neither historian offered “obtuse, inconsequent, and insensitive” remarks. Rather, each argued that global and historical perspective might make for less blather from politicians and the news media.

Having ripped each sentence from context, Posner declares that as a matter of logic, absolutely nothing followed from either statement. Of course not. How many premises yield logical entailments without intermediate premises? The trick is obvious to every reader who realizes that Posner has discarded the author’s other premises. Readers who have not read Foner’s or Laqueur’s remarks, on the other hand, might be bamboozled.

William Haltom

South Burlington, Vt.

Richard A. Posner replies:

The books of mine to which Professor Ackerman refers at the outset of his letter are full-length books published by respected academic presses (Harvard and Princeton respectively) after full academic review. They are not 800-word op-eds, or full-page ads containing palpable errors. I do not criticize academics for having broad interests; I wish more of them did. I criticize them for off-the-cuff commentary on matters about which they know nothing more than the average newspaper reader does.

William Haltom claims that the sentences

I quoted from Professors Foner and Laqueur were taken out of context. He does not supply any of the missing context; and he could not. The rest of Foner’s statement makes clear that he is indeed as frightened of Bush as he is of bin Laden. Laqueur derides the President for having said “that this peace-loving people has been attacked by ‘evil’ itself in a disaster without equal.” He remarks that “the terrorists acts of victors are magically transformed” into “a heroic blow for righteousness” and intimates a comparison between John Brown and Osama bin Laden. He ends with the following sentence fragment: “Anything but stale rhetoric from John Wayne movies.”

These statements by eminent academics should make us wonder about the accuracy of Ackerman’s claim that “our politics is much enriched by scholars who dare to write for a general public.”

Advice & Consent

Bernard Lewis (“What Went Wrong With Muslim Civilization?” January *Atlantic*) argues that “it is precisely the lack of freedom—freedom of the mind from constraint and indoctrination, to question and inquire and speak; freedom of the economy from corrupt and pervasive mismanagement; freedom of women from male oppression; freedom of citizens from tyranny—that underlies so many of the troubles of the Muslim world.” Conversely, Western societies have become rich and politically stable and their citizens have been able to lead fuller and longer lives because they value these freedoms. Yet, as Lewis has often emphasized, during the Middle Ages Christendom was less free, less civilized, poorer, and far less tolerant of religious and intellectual diversity than Islam. So one should also ask, What went right with Western civilization? Why did the West begin to value freedom and to view extreme social, political, and economic inequality as undesirable? Part of the answer may be that during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries a new way of thinking about humankind and its place in the world arose to challenge the outlook of educated Europeans.

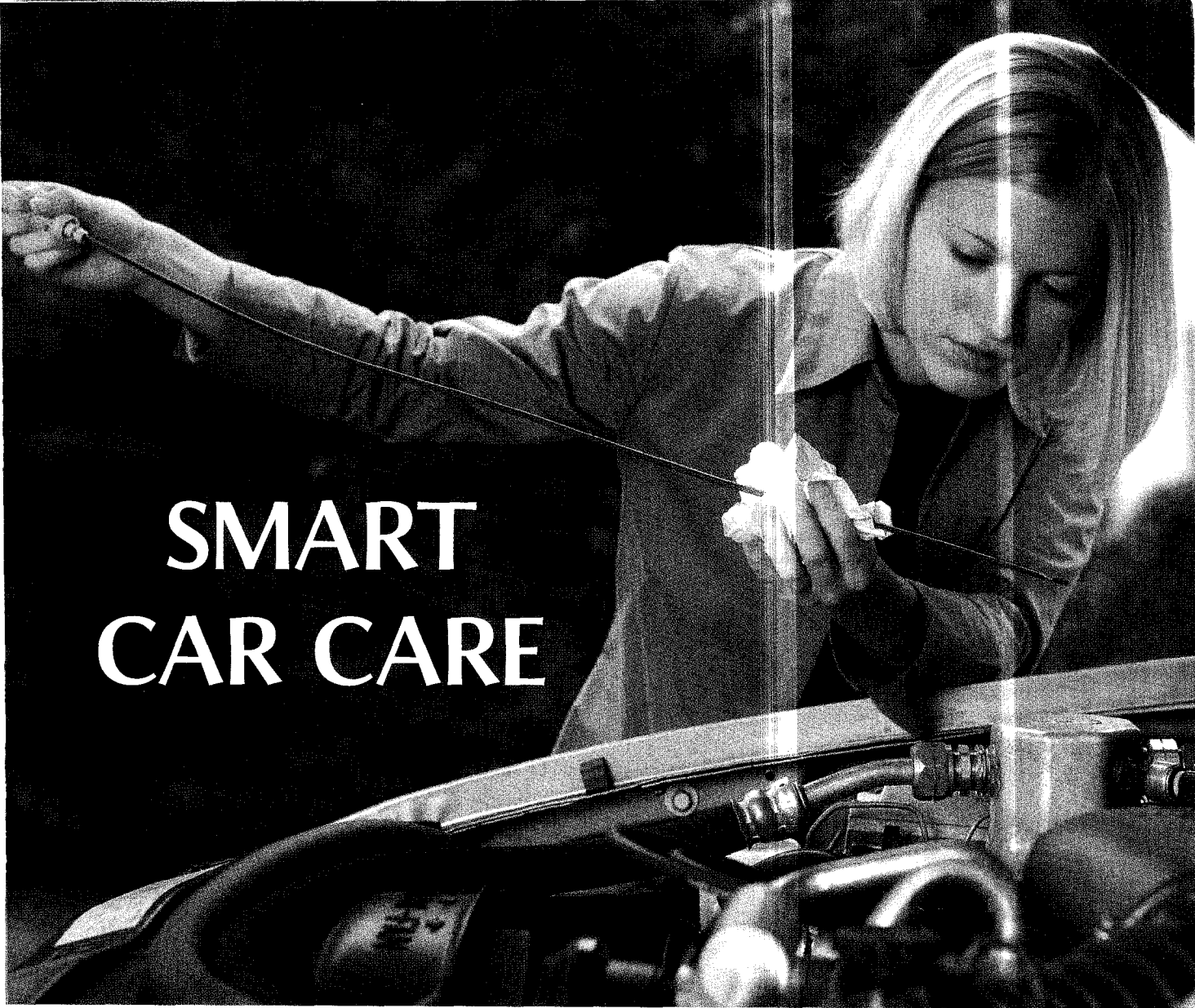
Ironically, Islam was the proximate source of this new way of thinking. From the ninth century onward Islamic scholars had preserved Greek mathemat-

ical and scientific works that had been “lost in the barbarous and for the most part uninterested West” (as Lewis wrote in *The Middle East*). In the sixteenth century some of these works began to appear in Europe in Latin translations (often of Arabic translations of the original Greek), enabling Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo to pick up the broken thread of Greek science. The scientific revolution in turn helped to launch the broader cultural revolution of which we in the West are the heirs.

In the West the culture war started by Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo is almost over, though here and there—especially in the United States—rearguard actions are still being fought. Within the Muslim world it has hardly begun. At its core it is, I suggest, a conflict between two visions of truth—one hierarchical and authoritarian, in which revealed truths are constantly threatened by heresy and apostasy; the other democratic and tolerant, thriving on innovation and criticism, in which truths about the world and the human condition are always incomplete, always subject to revision and improvement. In science only one of these ways works, and this may be a source of hope. For although Muslim fundamentalists (like their Christian and Jewish counterparts) would like to take their followers back to the pre-modern world, most ordinary people, whatever their religious or ethnic loyalties, want the benefits of science-based technology and medicine. No society, however, can hope to enjoy the goods that religious fundamentalists would like their followers to forgo unless it supports a thriving scientific community. And although science is culture-neutral, flourishing as well in Japan as in California, it is not value-neutral. As European history shows, and as events in the Soviet Union and present-day China have borne out, its core values—anti-authoritarianism, openness to criticism, and the belief that reason and evidence are the surest guides to truth—are contagious. They also happen to be core values of modern secular democratic societies.

David Layzer

*Donald H. Menzel Research Professor of Astrophysics
Harvard University
Cambridge, Mass.*



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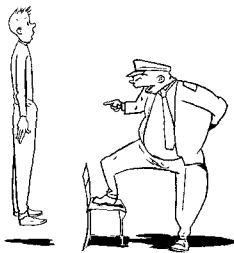
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INNOCENT BYSTANDER

by CULLEN MURPHY

DELETE, BABY, DELETE

*We're not quite as good at destruction
as we think we are*

.....

Earlier this year, as the Enron debacle began to unfold, the company's accounting firm revealed that its employees had destroyed a "significant but undetermined number" of Enron-related documents, either by shredding paper files or by deleting electronic ones. Actually, the firm revealed that its employees had *sought* to destroy the documents. How much destruction had in fact been achieved remained uncertain. Computer sleuths moved in quickly, looking for "fingerprints" of the missing electronic transmissions on hard drives and backup tapes; it seems likely that many of the electronic documents have not been fully erased and will be recovered. Some of the shredded documents from Enron itself may also be recovered—a task made easier by the fact that pages were sometimes put through the shredding machines sideways, leaving individual lines of type intact. "It's impossible to destroy all copies of documents," a Washington lawyer told *The Wall Street Journal*. "They inevitably show up."

Commentators have already drawn many lessons from the Enron case. One that I have yet to hear mentioned is that human beings are not as good at destroying things as we think we are. Oh, we talk a good game. One of the first verbs I was taught in Latin class was "*devastare*," "to lay waste," because it was needed to describe so much of Roman foreign policy. During the Cold War the nuclear strategy of both sides was governed by the concept of "mutual assured destruction." *Roger's The-saurus* provides three times as many synonyms for "destroy" as it does for "create." In the United States, of course,

destruction is an opportunity for commerce. Some 600 companies specialize in rendering documents into cinders or confetti. They have a trade association (the National Association for Information Destruction) and a code of ethics.

There is no denying that human beings have laid waste to a great many things in the course of time: cities, species, vast amounts of cultural heritage. What seems more remarkable, though, is how often attempts at destruction go awry.

On the eve of the takeover of the U.S. embassy in Iran, in 1979, American officials desperately fed secret documents into the embassy's paper shredders. Over the next several

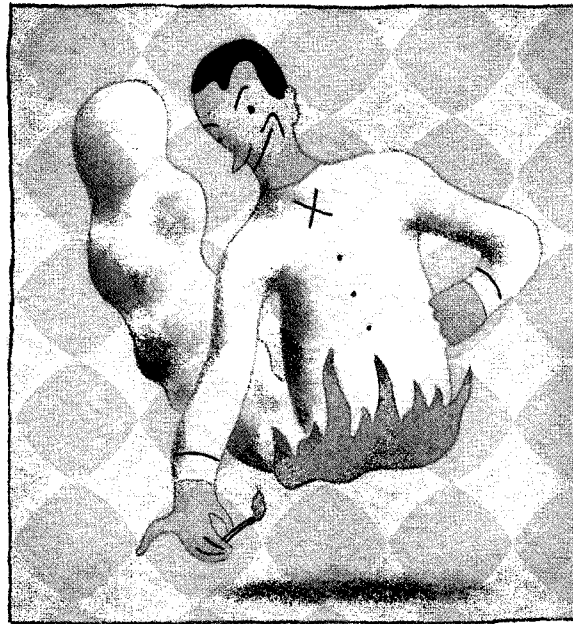
During the controversy over the Iran-contra affair, in 1986, Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North attempted to erase all the relevant e-mail messages on his computer; he repeatedly pressed the DELETE button, thinking that he was thereby expunging the messages. "Wow, were we wrong!" he later observed. North didn't know that pressing DELETE doesn't result in complete deletion. He also didn't know about the existence of a backup data-storage system.

Burial is another highly unreliable means of destruction. In the early 1980s some twenty-five boxes of documents pertaining to allegations of financial irregularities at the University of South Carolina were deposited in the Rockland County landfill. As it happens,

landfills tend to mummify their contents rather than to biodegrade them. Years later investigators somehow located the documents, which remained intact and legible. Another problem with burial is that it too easily accommodates changes of heart. In 1862 the poet and painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti lost his wife, Elizabeth, to an overdose of laudanum; stricken with grief, he gathered up his unpublished poems and placed them in her coffin. Rossetti came to regret

this act. Seven years later he had Elizabeth's body exhumed, and retrieved the poetry.

Historically, the most reliable means of destruction has been fire; used according to directions, it really does work. One of the grimmest episodes in the annals of combustion took place in



years, while waiting for satellite dishes and *Baywatch* to arrive, the Iranians painstakingly stitched the documents back together. They ultimately published the reconstituted intelligence files in some sixty volumes, under the overarching title *Documents From the U.S. Espionage Den*.

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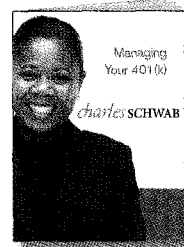
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1835, when Thomas Carlyle asked John Stuart Mill to read a just-completed draft of the first volume of his monumental study *The French Revolution*. Mill took the handwritten manuscript away. Some while later he stood before Carlyle, ashen, explaining that his maid had accidentally destroyed it while lighting a fire. Carlyle received the news stoically; he told his wife afterward, "Mill, poor fellow, is terribly cut up. We must endeavor to hide from him how very serious this business is for us."

Fire destroyed the library at Alexandria. It has been the means favored by al Qaeda (whose hideouts are littered with incinerated evidence) and by Mrs. Warren G. Harding (who thereby obviated the need for a presidential library). It makes a frequent appearance in testamentary directives. One legal scholar has lamented that the correspondence of Benjamin Cardozo, a profoundly private man, was handled by the judge's executor "the way Warwick handled Jeanne d'Arc." Some recent losses to fire have been especially vexing. In the mid-1970s Colonel Guy Tutwiler, the commander of the University of Arkansas ROTC, incinerated a file relating to Bill Clinton's draft status and Clinton's (broken) promise to join the ROTC. The action was taken at Clinton's request. During the 1992 presidential campaign, when the matter surfaced, Master Sergeant Eddie Howard, who served under Tutwiler, provided an explanation that is hard to better: "One reason Colonel Tutwiler burned the file was that I think he thought it shouldn't exist."

But even fire is an imperfect disposal option. For one thing, its utter finality can be a psychological deterrent. Virgil instructed that the *Aeneid* be cast into the flames after his death; the Emperor Augustus couldn't bring himself to do it. Plato's *Second Epistle* ends with a request that the epistle be burned; obviously, the request was not honored. A letter from Jane Welsh Carlyle concludes, "Pray read all this unto yourself and burn the letter." A scholar has added this gloss: "Such an injunction is one of the surest methods of guaranteeing that a letter will not be burned."

Not only do some attempts at destruction achieve a less than satisfactory outcome; on occasion they become the cause of outright preservation. The Assyrian empire was brought down in the seventh century B.C. by an invading force of Babylonians, Scythians, and Medes. The conquerors put the great library of Ashurbanipal to the torch. Because the library's contents were written on clay tablets, the consequence was to fire the archives, as if they were so much pottery. Some 20,000 cuneiform tablets survived in the form of accidental ceramics.

Fragments of the works of Sappho have come down to us because someone in antiquity, wanting to get rid of papyrus copies of Sappho's poetry, threw them into the trash in the Egyptian city of Oxyrhynchus, where archaeologists found them. Certain works by Archimedes have survived only because his words were scraped off by medieval scribes; the scribes re-used the parchment for a sacred book, whose sanctity ensured its survival into an age when a different kind of eyes could tease out the underlying original. The mosaics of Hagia Sofia, in Istanbul, were inadvertently spared degradation when the Ottoman Turks covered them with plaster. The early Christian writer Irenaeus spent a lifetime denouncing heretical books; many of the books were lost (burned), and yet the ideas survived through extensive quotation in his own fiery writing.

In the case of ideas, an attempt to destroy them head on almost always gives them enduring life. Indifference, though, is fatal. The radical philosopher Herbert Marcuse made many unfortunate pronouncements during the 1960s, but he was on to something with the notion of "repressive tolerance"—the capacity of a laissez-faire culture like ours to disarm almost anything. Marcuse coined the phrase in the mid-1960s, right around the time when the Black Panther leader Bobby Seale was helping to make the angry taunt "Burn, baby, burn!" familiar; two decades later Seale was busy promoting *Barbeque'n With Bobby Seale*, a collection of recipes. ■

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THE AGENDA

ESSAYS THIS MONTH *on why Americans hate the idea of identity cards, why we urgently need vote control, and why conservatives should embrace homosexual marriage.*

DAVID BROOKS

"The great moral contest for the meritocrat is not between good and evil or virtue and vice. The great temptation is triviality." PAGE 22

JONATHAN RAUCH

"Homosexuals are pleading to move beyond cohabitation. And who is telling us to just shack up instead? Self-styled friends of matrimony." PAGE 24

JACK BEATTY

"George Bush wants to leave an America in his own image, a country of sons standing upon their fathers. He is governing from his biography." PAGE 27

WALTER KIRN

"To Americans, the first step toward redemption is a ritual wiping out of the self. To be ID'd—sorted, tagged, and permanently filed—is to lose a bit of one's soul. To die a little." PAGE 28

P. J. O'ROURKE

"Voting should remain available for sporting and recreational purposes. But certain types of votes clearly should be curtailed—'assault votes,' for example, in which the only purpose of the vote is to harm others." PAGE 30

STEPHEN GLAIN

"Hwang Jong Yop is the highest-ranking official ever to have defected from North Korea. He is widely suspected of knowing about Pyongyang's nuclear-weapons program. Why has South Korea kept Hwang tightly confined and hidden away?" PAGE 32

SLOW SQUEEZE

One legacy of Vietnam that we continue to live with is the idea that air power cannot win a war

.....

Last month, in the first of these columns devoted to the new American way of war and its application in Afghanistan and potentially in Iraq, I discussed the failure of air power in World War II to satisfy the age-old dream of ideal war—war in which the other side quits after a minimum of fighting. In this second installment I had meant to trace the use of air power through the conflicts in Vietnam, the Persian Gulf, the Balkans, and Afghanistan, showing the eventual (and in the end sudden) arrival of air power's revolution. However, as the reader will see, I got bogged down in Vietnam, as has happened to others.

COMMENT

MICHAEL KELLY

limited casualties on both sides. It was to be a rational war, and bombing was to serve as the chief instrument of rationality. As the American Brigadier General Dave Palmer later wrote,

Civilian planners wanted to start out softly and gradually increase the pressure by precise increments which could be unmistakably recognized in Hanoi. Ho Chi Minh would see the tightening pattern, the theory went, and would sensibly stop the war against South Vietnam in time to avoid devastation of his homeland.

Assistant Secretary of Defense John T. McNaughton dubbed the strategy "slow squeeze," and explained it in musical terms—an orchestration of activities which would proceed in crescendo fashion toward a finale.

The Vietnam War evolved—or, rather, muddled along—over a long time, at least from 1954 to 1975, and to a great degree American strategy in Vietnam was always reactive, ad hoc, and confused. But at the core of the strategy there was a theory, and this theory was a revival and a refinement of the World War II dream of victory through bombing. The theory was called by various names, "graduated response" and "phased escalation" among them, and it held that a calibrated and predictably increasing use of bombing against North Vietnam would eventually force the Communists to abandon their efforts to take over South Vietnam and to accept a negotiated peace that would leave Vietnam partitioned between the North and the South, as it had been since the close of the first Indochina war, in 1954.

To its supporters this seemed quite an elegant idea: a limited approach to war in pursuit of a limited goal, with

In time "phased escalation" would be widely seen as the very epitome of insanity in strategy, and it had its detractors from the beginning—notably among those people who knew something about war. (The theory was always much more beloved by the civilians than by the generals in the Pentagon.) Still, there was a logic to the madness. Then as now, the United States was the wealthiest and most militarily advanced nation in the world, and its air power, it would seem, was more than capable of overcoming North Vietnam's defenses; North Vietnam's limited industrial, communication, and transportation infrastructures ought to be easily destroyable from the air; destroying them would quickly reduce an already desperately poor nation to a terrible state; the United States sought to persuade North Vietnam only to cease its aggression, not to surrender unconditionally;

ILLUSTRATIONS BY RICHARD THOMPSON

ergo, North Vietnam would do the rational thing: choose a limited loss over ruination, and accept peace.

The air campaign in Southeast Asia was the most colossal display of bombing might in history—and also the most ambitious test of the theory of air power. It began in earnest in December of 1964, and continued in its main phase until President Lyndon Johnson ordered an end to bombing, on October 31, 1968; President Richard Nixon ordered two lesser campaigns in 1972. All told, American warplanes dropped nearly eight million tons of bombs on an area about a third the size of France—four times the amount dropped in World War II and seventeen times the amount dropped in the Korean War. In the campaign's peak year, 1967, American

complexes. Such targets could be quickly repaired, moved, or circumvented, and so had to be bombed again and again." The North Vietnamese were able to disperse urban populations and also, to some degree, industrial capacity to the countryside. It proved impossible to stanch the flow of men and supplies from North Vietnam to the South on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. China and the Soviet Union kept the Communists supplied with food and materiel.

And the price was staggering. Again, bombing turned out to be perilous for the bombers as well as for the bombed. The North Vietnamese air defenses, augmented by Russian and Chinese support, turned out to be unexpectedly robust, and by the time Johnson ordered an end to the bombing, the United States had

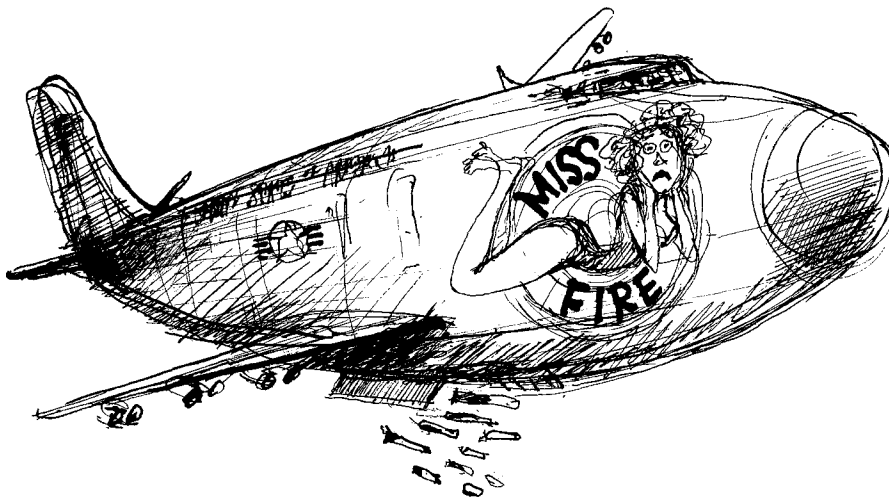
destruction. Estimates of civilian deaths in Vietnam differ, but they are all large. Hanoi claims that two million civilians were killed in North Vietnam in twenty-one years of war; a more objective estimate puts the civilian death toll for all of Vietnam at 415,000—still appalling.

Moral opposition to the war was fueled by revulsion at the effects of bombing. Over time this opposition came to undermine the will of the war makers and, finally, the ability to continue waging war. By October 31, 1968, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara was privately horrified by a campaign that, he estimated, was costing a thousand civilian lives a week; the former presidential adviser McGeorge Bundy had publicly called for an end to bombing; and Vice President Hubert Humphrey, who was running to succeed his boss in office, had all but promised to stop it. Johnson's decision to end the bombing reflected, as Turley puts it, "the tacit acknowledgment that the United States could not go on pulverizing a society that was so much smaller, weaker, and poorer than itself without provoking moral outrage at home and abroad."

The last bombing campaigns of the war, Nixon's two "Operation Linebacker" campaigns, succeeded in their aim of driving the North Vietnamese to negotiate, but they also strengthened what was by then the establishment view that the American air campaign in Vietnam had been not only a strategic failure but a moral disgrace.

After America's first failed war, then, the view on air power that had arisen from World War II was only—powerfully—confirmed. In an effort far more ambitious than that during World War II, and even given great advances in U.S. technology, bombing had once again proved to be indecisive. War could not be won by air alone. Air power could not break an enemy. Depending on air power could only delude generals into throwing more lives into a lost cause on the ground. Any attempt to use air power on the scale required to win a war necessitated a level of slaughter that a civilized democracy would support only when national survival itself was at stake. ▀

Next: Advances in technology, a revolution in strategy.



planes flew 108,000 sorties. The campaign succeeded in wreaking devastation. As noted in William S. Turley's history *The Second Indochina War* (1986), the Communists later said that bombing had destroyed almost all the industrial, transportation, and communication facilities built since 1954, had wrecked three major cities and twelve of twenty-nine provincial capitals, and had set any hope of economic progress back ten to fifteen years.

Yet the campaign failed, utterly. As in World War II, and for similar reasons, air power could not deliver on the modern version of the age-old dream of victory without the butcher's bill. Targets proved elusive. From *The Second Indochina War*: "The bombs had to fall on roads, bridges, and transportation

lost 818 airmen and 918 aircraft. And bombing proved no substitute for troops on the ground. The United States was forced into a series of escalating troop commitments; from 1964 to 1973, the main period of conflict, more than 8.7 million Americans served in the war. More than 57,000 Americans died in the conflict, and 313,616 were wounded. South Vietnam saw more than 185,000 of its soldiers killed and nearly half a million wounded; North Vietnam and the Viet Cong reported losses of 924,048 in combat.

Overarching all of this was the moral problem—the problem bombing posed for a civilized democracy. Precision bombing still did not exist in any real sense. From the beginning the American air campaign was broad and brutal in its

THE MERITS OF MERITOCRACY

Can self-fulfillment build character?

.....

My daughter is a four-helmet kid. She has a regular helmet she wears bike riding, pogo sticking, and when she borrows her older brother's skateboard. She has a pink batting helmet, which she wears during her Little League baseball games. She has a helmet for horseback-riding lessons, on Sundays. And she has a helmet for ice hockey, which she plays on Friday afternoons. (For hockey she also has an equipment bag large enough to hold several corpses.) My daughter's not even a jock (although she is something of a live wire). Her main interest is art, which she does in an after-school program on Tuesdays and at home on her own.

But it's her helmets that really got me thinking. They're generally scattered around the equipment racks in our garage, along with her brothers' helmet collections and all manner of sleds, mitts, scooters, bicycles, and balls, and they represent a certain sort of childhood—a childhood that has now become typical in middle-class America.

It's a busy childhood, filled with opportunities, activities, teams, coaches, and, inevitably, gear. It's a safety-conscious childhood, with ample adult supervision. And it is, I believe (at least I want to believe), a happy and fulfilling childhood that will prepare my daughter for a happy adult life.

This sort of childhood is different from the childhoods Americans have traditionally had. It's not an independent childhood, like Huck Finn's or the Bowery Boys'. Today's middle-class kids, by and large, don't live apart from adult society, free to explore and experiment and, through adventure and misadventure, teach themselves the important lessons of life. Nor is it a Horatio Alger childhood. Middle-class kids by definition haven't come from poverty and deprivation. Nor do they build self-discipline from having to work on a farm. If they hunger for success, it's not because they started at the bottom.

Today's mode of raising kids generates a lot of hand-wringing and anxiety,

some of it on my part. We fear that kids are spoiled by the abundance and frenetic activity all around them. We fear that the world of suburban sprawl, Game Boys, Britney Spears CDs, and shopping malls will dull their moral senses. We fear that they are too deferential to authority, or that they are confronted with so many choices that they never have to make real commitments. Or we fear that they are skipping over childhood itself. The toy companies call this phenomenon "age compression": Kids

who are ten no longer want toys that used to appeal to ten-year-olds. Now it is three-to-five-year-olds who go for Barbie dolls. By the time a girl is seven she wants to be a mini-adult.

But I've come to believe that our fears are overblown. The problem is that the way kids (and, for that matter, the rest of us) live is estranged from the formulaic ideas we have about building character. We assume that character is forged through hardship—economic deprivation, war, and so on—and that we who have had it easy, who have grown up in this past half century of peace and prosperity, must necessarily have weak or suspect souls.

It's true that we live amid plenty; even in time of war we are told to keep shopping. But today's kids have a way of life that entails its own character-building process, its own ethical system. They live in a world of almost crystalline meritocracy. Starting at birth, middle-class Americans are called on to master skills, do well in school, practice sports, excel in extracurricular activities, get into college, build their résumés, change careers, be good in bed, set up retirement plans, and so on. This is a way of life that emphasizes individual achievement, self-propulsion, perpetual improvement, and permanent exertion.

The prime ethical imperative for the meritocrat is self-fulfillment. The phrase sounds New Agey; it calls to mind a Zen vegan sitting on the beach at dawn contemplating his narcissism. But over the past several years the philosophers

Charles Taylor, of McGill University, and Alan Gewirth, of the University of Chicago, have argued that a serious moral force is contained in the idea of self-fulfillment. Meritocrats may not necessarily be able to articulate this morality, but they live by it nonetheless.

It starts with the notion that we have a lifelong mission to realize our capacities. "It is a bringing of oneself to flourishing completion, an unfolding of what is strongest or best in oneself, so that it represents the successful culmination of one's aspirations or potentialities," Gewirth wrote in *Self-Fulfillment* (1998). The way we realize our potential is through our activities. By ceaselessly striving to improve at the things we enjoy, we come to define, enlarge, and attain our best selves. These activities are the bricks of our identities; if we didn't write or play baseball or cook or litigate (or whatever it is we do well), we would cease to be who we are. This is what Karl Marx was describing when he wrote, "Milton produced *Paradise Lost* as a silkworm produces silk, as the activation of his own nature."

In this mode of living, character isn't something one forges as a youth and then retains thereafter. Morality doesn't come to one in a single revelation or a grand moment of epiphany. Instead, virtue and character are achieved gradually and must be maintained through a relentless struggle for self-improvement. We are in an ongoing dialogue with our inadequacies, and we are happiest when we are most deeply engaged in overcoming them.

This is not a solitary process. Once ensconced in an activity, we find ourselves surrounded by mentors, coaches, teachers, colleagues, teammates, consultants, readers, and audience members. Society helps us in two ways. First, it gives us opportunities to participate in the things that will allow us to realize our capacities: Parents earnestly cast about for activities their children will love, and then spend their weekends driving them from one to another. Good schools have extracurricular offerings. Good companies and organizations allow their employees and members to explore new skills, and great nations have open, fluid societies—so that indi-

COMMENT
**DAVID
BROOKS**

viduals can find their best avenues and go as far as their merit allows.

Second, society surrounds the individual with a web of instruction, encouragement, and recognition. The hunger for recognition is a great motivator for the meritocrat. People define themselves in part by the extent to which others praise and appreciate them. In traditional societies recognition was determined by birth, breeding, and social station, but in a purified meritocracy people have to win it through performance. Each person responds to signals from those around him, working hard at activities that win praise and abandoning those that don't. (America no doubt leads the world in trophy production per capita.) An individual's growth, then, is a joint project of the self and society.

In this joint project individuals not only improve their capacities; they also come to realize that they cannot fully succeed unless they make a contribution to the society that helped to shape them. A scientist may be good at science, but she won't feel fulfilled unless she has made important discoveries or innovations that help those around her. Few meritocrats are content to master pointless tasks.

Social contributions—giving back—flow easily and naturally from the meritocrat's life mission. Baseball players enjoy clinics where they share tips with younger players. Parents devote many hours to coaching, or they become teachers, managers, and mentors. In the best relationships what follows is a sort of love affair. Mentor and pupil work hard to help each other and to honor each other's effort. Most find that they glimpse their best selves while working with others on an arduous undertaking, whether it is staging a play, competing for a championship, or arguing a case in court.

The great moral contest for the meritocrat is not between good and evil or virtue and vice. Most meritocrats are prudent, so they don't commit terrible crimes or self-destructive follies. The great temptation is triviality. Society recognizes the fulfillment of noble capacities, but it also rewards shallow achievements. A person can be famous simply for being rich or good-looking. Sometimes it's the emptiest

but splashiest activities that win the most attention. It can be easy to fall into a comfortable pattern of self-approval. Society seems to be rewarding you for what you are doing. Your salary goes up. You get promoted. You win bonuses. But you haven't tapped your capacities to the fullest.

Meritocrats therefore face a continual struggle to choose worthy opportunities over trivial ones. Charles Taylor argues that each of us has an intuitive ability to make what he calls "strong evaluations" of which aspirations are



noblest. We do this, he believes, by tapping into any of a variety of moral frameworks, which have been handed down through time and which have "significance independent of us or our desires." It is necessary, then, to dig deep into what it means to be a Christian or a Jew or an American or a doctor. By this way of thinking, society's rebels had it all wrong when they tried to find self-fulfillment by breaking loose from tradition. Their rebellions created selves without roots or moral reference points.

Burrowing down into an inherited tradition allows the meritocrat to strive upward.

For decades social critics have sold Americans short. All those books about the Organization Man, the culture of narcissism, the last man, and the flat, commercial materialism of American life underestimated the struggles and opportunities to build character that are embedded in the meritocratic system. The critics applied bygone codes to today's way of life. Inevitably, they have found kids, and us, wanting, and not in the areas where we truly are wanting (chief among these being that we don't sufficiently educate our children in the substance of the moral traditions they are inheriting—the history of Christianity, the history of Judaism, the history of America).

Today's kids live amid peace and prosperity, true. But theirs is not an easy life. Has there ever been a generation compelled to accomplish so much—to establish an identity, succeed in school, cope with technological change, maneuver through the world of group dating and diverse sexual orientation, and make daily decisions about everything from cell-phone rate plans to brands of sugar substitute? The meritocrat's life is radically open, but its very openness creates a series of choices and challenges that are demanding and subtle because they are never-ending and because they are embedded in the pattern of everyday life—rather than being faced, say, at one crucial, life-determining moment on the battlefield.

There is virtue in trying to articulate the codes we live by, open and diverse and sprawling as those codes may be. Perhaps if we can reach a reasonably accurate understanding of the moral landscape of our lives, we will be better able to achieve our dreams and guide our ethical debates—though we will no doubt still have need of protective headgear. ▀

THE MARRYING KIND

Why social conservatives should support same-sex marriage

.....

Last year the Census Bureau reported a statistic that deserved wider notice than it received: during the 1990s the number of unmarried-partner households in the United States increased by 72 percent. Cohabitation has actually been on the rise for decades, but it started from a small base. Now the numbers (more than five million cohabiting couples) are beginning to look impressive.

Marriage, meanwhile, is headed in the other direction. The annual number of weddings per 1,000 eligible women fell by more than a third from 1970 to 1996. A lot of factors are at work here—for example, people are marrying later—but it seems clear that one of them is the rise in cohabitation. Couples are simply more willing to live together without tying the knot.

Whether this is a bad thing is a contentious question, but it is almost certainly not a good thing. Cohabitation tends to be both less stable and less happy than marriage, and this appears to be true even after accounting for the possibility that the cohabiting type of person may often be different from the marrying type. Research suggests that marriage itself brings something beneficial to the table. Add the fact that a growing share of cohabiting households—now more than a third of them—contain children, and it is hard to be enthusiastic about the trend.

Whom to blame? In part, homosexual couples like me and my partner. Cohabitation used to be stigmatized. “Living in sin” it has been called in recent memory, even among the educated classes. Today cohabitation is often viewed as a different-but-equal alternative to wedlock. Although the drift toward cohabitation would no doubt have happened anyway, the growing visibility and acceptance of same-sex couples probably speeded the change. As one gay activist told the *Los Angeles Times* last year, “Just the term ‘unmarried partner’ gave it a dignity and social category.”

So (conservatives say) it’s true! Homosexuals undermine marriage! To the contrary. The culprit is not the presence of same-sex couples; it is the absence of same-sex marriage.

The emergence into the open of same-sex relationships is an irreversible fact in this country. Traditionalists may not like it, but they cannot change it, so they will have to decide how to deal with it. The far right’s plan—try to push homosexuals back into the closet—is not going to work; the majority of Americans are too openhearted for that. Indeed, the currents of

public opinion are running the other way. An annual survey of college freshmen found that last year 58 percent—a record high, and up from 51 percent in 1997—thought that same-sex couples should be able to marry.

Seeing those numbers and others like them, conservatives are desperate to stave off same-sex marriage. For that matter, many moderates remain queasy about legalizing gay marriage; they are sympathetic to homosexuals, but not *that* sympathetic. Liberation-minded leftists, who spent the 1970s telling us that our parents’ marriages were outdated and stuffy, were never crazy about matrimony to begin with. As for gays, the vast majority want the right to marry, but most agree that domestic-partner benefits and other “marriage-lite” arrangements are a lot better than nothing.

The result is the ABM Pact: Anything But Marriage. Enroll same-sex partners in the company health plan, give them some of the legal prerogatives of spousehood, attend their commitment ceremonies, let them register at city hall as partners—just DON’T CALL IT MARRIAGE. In America, and in Europe, too, ABM is rapidly establishing itself as the compromise of choice. Gay partnerships get some social and legal recognition, marriage remains the union of man and woman, and everybody moves on. A shrewd social bargain, no?

No. The last thing supporters of marriage should be doing is setting up

an assortment of alternatives, but that is exactly what the ABM Pact does, and not only for gays. Every year more companies and governments (at the state and local level) grant marriagelike benefits to cohabiting partners: “concessions fought for and won mostly by gay groups,” as the *Los Angeles Times* notes, “but enjoyed as well by the much larger population of heterosexual unmarried couples.” To which might be added what I think of as the *Will & Grace* effect: homosexuals are here, we’re queer, and nowadays we’re kind of cool. ABM, perversely, turns one of the country’s more culturally visible minorities into an advertisement for just how cool and successful life outside of wedlock can be.

I doubt that most homosexuals would take their marital vows less seriously than heterosexuals do, as some conservatives insist. Even if I’m wrong, however, surely the exemplary power of failed or unfaithful gay marriages would pale next to the example currently being set by a whole group—an increasingly fashionable group—among whom love and romance and sex and commitment flourish entirely outside of marriage. And can you imagine social conservatives telling any other group to cohabit rather than marry? Can you imagine them saying, “The young men of America’s inner cities won’t take marriage as seriously as they should, so let’s encourage them to shack up with their girlfriends?”

Those who worry about the example gays would set by marrying should be much more worried about the example gays are already setting by *not* marrying. In getting this backward the advocates of ABM make a mistake that is both ironic and sad. At a time when marriage needs all the support and participation it can get, homosexuals are pleading to move beyond cohabitation. We want the licenses, the vows, the rings, the honeymoons, the anniversaries, the benefits, and, yes, the responsibilities and the routines. And who is telling us to just shack up instead? Self-styled friends of matrimony. Someday conservatives will look back and wonder why they undermined marriage in an effort to keep homosexuals out. ■

COMMENT
**JONATHAN
RAUCH**

**"ALONG WITH ALL THE GREAT MEMORIES HAS COME SOMETHING I THOUGHT
I'D NEVER EXPERIENCE—THE PAIN OF OSTEOARTHRITIS."**

—DOROTHY HAMILL

**VIOXX IS HERE. 24-HOUR RELIEF OF
THE MOST COMMON TYPE OF ARTHRITIS
PAIN, OSTEOARTHRITIS.**

It isn't about going for a medal. Or feeling like a kid again. It's about controlling the pain that can keep you from doing everyday things. And VIOXX may help. VIOXX is a prescription medicine for osteoarthritis, the most common type of arthritis.

**ONE PILL—ALL DAY AND
ALL NIGHT RELIEF.**

You take VIOXX only once a day. Just one little pill can relieve your pain all day and all night for a full 24 hours.

**VIOXX EFFECTIVELY
REDUCED PAIN AND
STIFFNESS.**

In clinical studies, once-daily VIOXX effectively reduced pain and stiffness. So VIOXX can help make it easier for you to do the things you want to do. Like going for a morning glide on the ice.

**TAKE WITH OR WITHOUT
FOOD.**

VIOXX doesn't need to be taken with food. So, you don't have to worry about scheduling VIOXX around meals.

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION
ABOUT VIOXX.**

People with allergic reactions, such as asthma, to aspirin or other arthritis medicines should not take VIOXX. In rare cases, serious stomach problems, such as bleeding, can occur without warning.

Tell your doctor if you have liver or kidney problems, or are pregnant. Also, VIOXX should not be used by women in late pregnancy.

VIOXX has been extensively studied in large clinical trials. Commonly reported side effects included upper respiratory infection, diarrhea, nausea and high blood pressure. Report any unusual symptoms to your doctor.

**ASK YOUR DOCTOR
OR HEALTHCARE
PROFESSIONAL ABOUT
VIOXX.**

Call 1-800-MERCK-30 for more information, or visit vioxx.com. Please see important additional information on the next page.

YOUR RESULTS MAY VARY.

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(rofecoxib)**

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**Patient Information about
VIOXX® (rofecoxib tablets and oral suspension)
VIOXX® (pronounced "VI-ox")
for Osteoarthritis and Pain
Generic name: rofecoxib ("ro-fa-COX-ib")**

9183904

You should read this information before you start taking VIOXX®. Also, read the leaflet each time you refill your prescription, in case any information has changed. This leaflet provides only a summary of certain information about VIOXX. Your doctor or pharmacist can give you an additional leaflet that is written for health professionals that contains more complete information. This leaflet does not take the place of careful discussions with your doctor. You and your doctor should discuss VIOXX when you start taking your medicine and at regular checkups.

What is VIOXX?

VIOXX is a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) that is used to reduce pain and inflammation (swelling and soreness). VIOXX is available as a tablet or a liquid that you take by mouth.

VIOXX is a medicine for:

- relief of osteoarthritis (the arthritis caused by age-related "wear and tear" on bones and joints)
- management of acute pain in adults (like the short-term pain you can get after a dental or surgical operation)
- treatment of menstrual pain (pain during women's monthly periods).

Who should not take VIOXX?

Do not take VIOXX if you:

- have had an allergic reaction such as asthma attacks, hives, or swelling of the throat and face to aspirin or other NSAIDs (for example, ibuprofen and naproxen).
- have had an allergic reaction to rofecoxib, which is the active ingredient of VIOXX, or to any of its inactive ingredients. (See Inactive Ingredients at the end of this leaflet.)

What should I tell my doctor before and during treatment with VIOXX?

Tell your doctor if you are:

- pregnant or plan to become pregnant. VIOXX should not be used in late pregnancy because it may harm the fetus.
- breast-feeding or plan to breast-feed. It is not known whether VIOXX is passed through to human breast milk and what its effects could be on a nursing child.

Tell your doctor if you have:

- kidney disease
- liver disease
- heart failure
- high blood pressure
- had an allergic reaction to aspirin or other NSAIDs
- had a serious stomach problem in the past.

Tell your doctor about:

- any other medical problems or allergies you have now or have had.
- all medicines that you are taking or plan to take, even those you can get without a prescription.

Tell your doctor if you develop:

- ulcer or bleeding symptoms (for instance, stomach burning or black stools, which are signs of possible stomach bleeding).
- unexplained weight gain or swelling of the feet and/or legs.
- skin rash or allergic reactions. If you have a severe allergic reaction, get medical help right away.

How should I take VIOXX?

VIOXX should be taken once a day. Your doctor will decide what dose of VIOXX you should take and how long you should take it. You may take VIOXX with or without food.

Can I take VIOXX with other medicines?

Tell your doctor about all of the other medicines you are taking or plan to take while you are on VIOXX, even other medicines that you can get without a prescription. Your doctor may want to check that your medicines are working properly together if you are taking other medicines such as:

- methotrexate (a medicine used to suppress the immune system)
- warfarin (a blood thinner)
- rifampin (an antibiotic)
- ACE inhibitors (medicines used for high blood pressure and heart failure)
- lithium (a medicine used to treat a certain type of depression).

What are the possible side effects of VIOXX?

Serious but rare side effects that have been reported in patients taking VIOXX and/or related medicines have included:

- Serious stomach problems, such as stomach and intestinal bleeding, can occur with or without warning symptoms. These problems, if severe, could lead to hospitalization or death. Although this happens rarely, you should watch for signs that you may have this serious side effect and tell your doctor right away.
- Serious allergic reactions including swelling of the face, lips, tongue, and/or throat which may cause difficulty breathing or swallowing and wheezing occur rarely but may require treatment right away. Severe skin reactions have also been reported.
- Serious kidney problems occur rarely, including acute kidney failure and worsening of chronic kidney failure.
- Severe liver problems, including hepatitis, jaundice and liver failure, occur rarely in patients taking NSAIDs, including VIOXX. Tell your doctor if you develop symptoms of liver problems. These include nausea, tiredness, itching, tenderness in the right upper abdomen, and flu-like symptoms.

In addition, the following side effects have been reported: anxiety, confusion, depression, hair loss, hallucinations, increased levels of potassium in the blood, low blood cell counts, palpitations, pancreatitis, tingling sensation, unusual headache with stiff neck (aseptic meningitis), vertigo.

More common, but less serious side effects reported with VIOXX have included the following:

Upper and/or lower respiratory infection and/or inflammation
Headache
Dizziness
Diarrhea
Nausea and/or vomiting
Heartburn, stomach pain and upset
Swelling of the legs and/or feet
High blood pressure
Back pain
Tiredness
Urinary tract infection.

These side effects were reported in at least 2% of osteoarthritis patients receiving daily doses of VIOXX 12.5 mg to 25 mg in clinical studies.

The side effects described above do not include all of the side effects reported with VIOXX. Do not rely on this leaflet alone for information about side effects. Your doctor or pharmacist can discuss with you a more complete list of side effects. Any time you have a medical problem you think may be related to VIOXX, talk to your doctor.

What else can I do to help manage my osteoarthritis pain?

Talk to your doctor about:

- Exercise
- Controlling your weight
- Hot and cold treatments
- Using support devices.

What else should I know about VIOXX?

This leaflet provides a summary of certain information about VIOXX. If you have any questions or concerns about VIOXX, osteoarthritis or pain, talk to your health professional. Your pharmacist can give you an additional leaflet that is written for health professionals.

Do not share VIOXX with anyone else; it was prescribed only for you. It should be taken only for the condition for which it was prescribed.

Keep VIOXX and all medicines out of the reach of children.

Inactive Ingredients:

Oral suspension: citric acid (monohydrate), sodium citrate (dihydrate), sorbitol solution, strawberry flavor, xanthan gum, sodium methylparaben, sodium propylparaben.

Tablets: croscarmellose sodium, hydroxypropyl cellulose, lactose, magnesium stearate, microcrystalline cellulose, and yellow ferric oxide.

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GOVERNING FROM HIS BIOGRAPHY

A President for whom tomorrow never comes

.....

George W. Bush has calculated that the future does not vote. His Administration has abandoned its obligations to posterity, from the environment to the budget to Social Security to regulation affecting the health and safety of Americans in the emerging digital workplace. Moral lapses notwithstanding, Bill Clinton acted as a responsible steward in raising taxes on affluent Americans to balance the budget and begin to pay down the national debt—a process set in motion by George H.W. Bush and now reversed by George W. Bush. We judge parents by the sacrifices they make in their present comfort for the sake of their children's well-being and education. At a certain point a parent realizes that he lives—he certainly works—for his children. That is the big moral discovery of adult life, and we should hold to it in judging leaders. The family models the polity. The test we apply to parents—how responsibly they care for the next generation—should apply to presidents. Bush fails the test.

Fails it—and for what? To pay off campaign contributions from corporate polluters; to redirect the Social Security surplus to tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans; and to throw money at the Pentagon for Cold War weapons he criticized during the election campaign and for a missile-defense system against the menace posed by Iran and North Korea—improving relations with which would undercut the rationale for the system. The President's new budget, as Al Hunt pointed out in *The Wall Street Journal* recently, cuts health insurance for poor children; shifts “the major burden of funding” for toxic-chemical cleanups from chemical companies to taxpayers; includes the smallest increase in education spending in seven years; and cuts the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program while funding the Crusader, an eighty-ton howitzer designed to deter a Soviet invasion of Western Europe (and made by a defense contractor whose advisers include George H.W. Bush). The budget also seeks to make permanent the

\$1.3 trillion tax cut of 2001, a step that would cost an additional \$343 billion in the first year of enactment and \$4 trillion over the next decade.

The bad numbers indicate worse values. Bush's overriding domestic priority seems to be to empty the Treasury and endanger the retirement of a generation in order to benefit the few, the powerful,

and the connected. This is Social Darwinist economics. If, to use the social historian Barrington Moore Jr.'s distinction, a “decent society” is one that seeks to mitigate the disadvantages

conferred by nature, then Bush has set our course toward an indecent society, in which to those to whom much is given, more is given. That has been the pattern of his life. Ending the estate tax is Bush's signature achievement. Passed by Congress in 1916 to “break up the swollen fortunes of the rich,” the estate tax gets all its revenue from the top 1.4 percent of estates (and two thirds from the top 0.2 percent)—roughly the Bush Christmas-card mailing list. The philosophy of the estate tax, the conservative financial writer James Glassman has said, is to “promote equality of opportunity.” Equal opportunity can at best be approximated, Glassman added, “but why not use the tax code to discourage a gigantic head start?” But Bush does not see anything offensive to the democratic ethos in gigantic head starts. He wants to leave an America in his own image, a country of sons standing upon their fathers. He is governing from his biography.

One need look no further than Bush's energy plan, heavy with subsidies for his friends in big oil, or the cosmic shrug of his global-warming policy. The former extends his experience in Texas to the nation, the latter to the world. When Texas was faced with a pollution crisis, the state's equivalent of the Environmental Protection Agency urged him to impose mandatory emissions standards on corporate polluters. Instead Bush asked the polluters to devise a plan to abate their own pollution. They obliged, and Bush adopted it. Texas

would have “voluntary” standards. These failed to reduce pollution; and after Bush left for Washington, they were replaced with mandatory standards. In his proposals concerning global warming, which were prepared with the help of the industry lobby the Edison Electric Institute and which, according to a British critic quoted in the *Financial Times*, follow “to the comma” a plan put forward by ExxonMobil, Bush has returned to voluntary standards. Outside experts not only predict that his proposals will fail to reduce U.S. greenhouse-gas emissions; they say that under his specious new metric of “emissions intensity” emissions may actually increase.

What does Bush care if this happens? He is not a steward of the global future. For him, time ends when he leaves office. According to his policy, if the voluntary standards don't work, they can be changed after 2012—three years beyond the end of his anticipated second term.

Before September 11 “presidentialized” him, to use the historian Arthur J. Schlesinger Jr.'s term, polls suggested that Bush was coming to be seen as the happy captive of corporate interests. From the days of Andrew Jackson's attack on the Bank of the United States as a Washington-favored corporation, the nexus between government and big business has ever been a source of public anger. Two years ago a *Business Week*/Harris poll found that 74 percent of Americans thought that business had too much influence over politics and government. The Bush Administration was enacting their ancestral fears. Then came September 11. The crisis gave Bush permission to mitigate a political liability and to govern for a whole people under attack, not just for the funders of the Republican Party. One held one's breath. He made a stirring speech. But by October he had reverted to his biography, embracing a stimulus bill that would shower nearly \$700 million in tax rebates on General Electric and \$250 million on Enron. People participating in focus groups refused to believe that the President's stimulus bill contained such provisions—the provisions were so much at variance with Bush's value-charged war leader's rhetoric. Their disbelief does them credit. ▀

COMMENT
**JACK
BEATTY**

THE MOTHER OF REINVENTION

The real reason Americans detest the idea of a national ID card

.....

Although the Constitution doesn't directly mention it, Americans have always reserved the right to reinvent themselves—to wade into the waters of rebirth and emerge with new faiths, new livelihoods, new spouses, new sexual preferences, and even new names. The cult of unending self-improvement, our informal national religion, takes as its primary article of faith the idea that who a person was yesterday or happens to be today doesn't determine who he'll be tomorrow. Whether for first-generation immigrants or seventh-generation establishment WASPs, this is the land of clean slates and second chances—where, for example, a decades-old drunk-driving arrest need not prevent a man from becoming President. It's no accident that most self-help groups use "anonymous" in their names; to Americans, the first step toward redemption is a ritual wiping out of the self, followed by the construction of a new one.

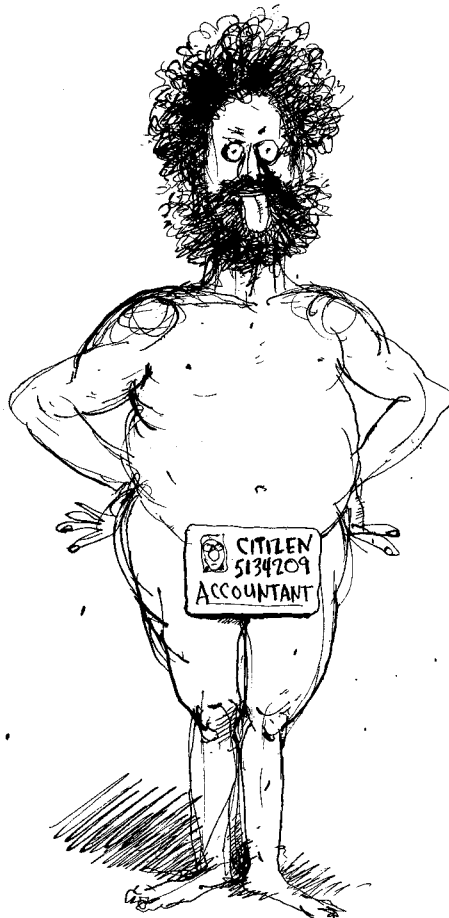
Which may account for some of the hostility to proposals for a new national identity card as a weapon in the war on terrorism. Orwellian fears of bureaucratic snooping fuel much of this resistance, but not all of it. There's a positive preference at work as well: for fluidity over stability, for dynamism over lamination. In America to be ID'd—sorted, tagged, and permanently filed—is to lose a bit of one's soul. To die a little.

This sounds like a subtle, poetic notion. It's not. In American legal and cultural tradition one essential privilege of citizenship is not having to prove it on demand. If a cop swaggers up to you on the street tomorrow and asks for your name, you won't be breaking any laws if you answer "Walt Whitman" or "Mickey Mouse." Not that you have to give any name at all. Of course, there's a chance that you'll be arrested anyway (possibly on some local vagrancy ordinance of doubtful constitutionality), but even then you'll have a right to silence. In principle the line is

clear: unless and until the citizen asks the state for something in return (the chance to drive a motor vehicle, say, or to fly on federally regulated aircraft), his identity, or lack of one, is purely his own business.

In practice the right to remain a cipher was largely bargained away with the New Deal. When the Social Security Act went into effect, some critics sensed a threat to personal privacy, and the government got busy reassuring them that they had nothing to fear. The deep-seated apprehension that Social Security numbers would come to serve as de facto national "dog tags" placed the Administration on the defensive and figured almost as prominently in the debate as concerns about the program's cost. (There were even rumors in the press that American workers might have to provide fingerprints as a precondition of

COMMENT
**WALTER
KIRN**



employment.) In retrospect the furor seems almost quaint. SSNs have over the years become, with precious little public outrage, precisely what the New Dealers swore they wouldn't become—near universal digital surnames.

Softened up by passwords, PINs, and credit ratings, most Americans no longer cringe at the prospect of being reduced to numbers. The national ID cards now being proposed in the name of homeland security would, however, take the process to a whole new level, by serving not merely as bureaucratic conveniences but as high-tech surrogate selves. In the industry they call them "smart cards." Embedded computer chips, instantly readable by machines, might store anything from one's date of birth to one's racial makeup. The information on the cards themselves would hardly matter, though; the key to the system would be the databases, richly detailed and voluminous, that the cards plugged into.

At the moment, the most popular plan is to link a new, improved state driver's license into a national computer network that would be accessed every time the card was swiped. Such a card might feature a "biometric" identifier: an electronic map of, say, its owner's iris or palm print. Card readers might be installed in airports, highway-patrol cars, and government buildings—no one really knows yet. What we do know, however, is that such cards, whatever their original stated purposes, are highly susceptible to mission creep. A Social Security number becomes, in time, a check-cashing and a taxpayer ID. A smart-card driver's license might soon mutate into a license to enter professional football games or to pass across the George Washington Bridge.

It's easy to have nightmares about such cards. With so much more identity to steal, identity theft would go from being a headache to something approaching virtual murder, consigning the victim to a physical and economic no-man's-land. Even worse, the card—and the river of personal data flowing from its tiny silicon head gate—might fall into the hands of marketers, forever rendering the unlucky bearer an easy

mark for coffee-of-the-month clubs and home-equity loans. And don't forget Big Brother.

One shudders to think how such cards might be abused. And yet however troubling the prospects of being tracked, hacked, or harassed, the real danger of a national ID card is the effect it might have on our definition of identity. American identity, that is. Out would go the old notions of personal metamorphosis and spiritual plasticity, to be replaced by the dead gray matrix of one's palm lines. As for that wonderful Whitmanian sense that the individual American somehow embraces and contains the multitude, it would shrink away right quick—along with the oddly sustaining national fantasy of hitting the road as a hippie or a cowboy.

Along with the right to reinvention and the intertwined right to remain anonymous, Americans have traditionally possessed this other strange, exhilarating freedom: the freedom to disappear. Most of the time it lies dormant and unused, but there have been moments in our history—during and after the Civil War, in the midst of the Great Depression, and at the height of the anti-war 1960s—when the freedom to go underground and out of sight has been crucial to our social survival. To vanish, to take a powder, to cut and run—from an army one can't fight for, a community one can't live with, or a directive one can't obey—can be a legitimate political act, and sometimes the consummate political act. In a digitized land of national ID cards, dropping out will be impossible, and dreaming about it will be futile.

For the purposes of a national ID card, identity is a unique, unchanging set of distinguishing characteristics: the flecks in one's iris, the ridges of one's left thumb. It's what sets us apart from others and from the mass. As Americans, though, we have a higher identity: free agent, self-legislator, citizen. It's a common identity held individually. It's what allows us to bond and make a nation or, if necessary, dissolve our bonds. This identity can't be captured on a card, but there is a risk it could be supplanted by one. ▀

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THE CASE FOR VOTE CONTROL

Campaign-finance reform is only a start

.....

Christopher Buckley and I were having a drink at the Warren Harding Club not long ago, and discussing the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002. It's wonderful, we agreed, that campaign finance is being reformed. The previous system of raising campaign funds was a shocking disgrace. From 1989 to 2001 Enron contributed almost \$6 million to candidates of both parties, and got what for its money? Lawsuits, subpoenas, Justice Department investigations, congressional hearings, and a parade of elected officials besmirching the reputations of Enron executives and vilifying the company name. "I trust," Christopher said, "that the new legislation—whatever it is—will put an end to that sort of thing. But," he continued, "now that we've fixed campaign finance, we need to face up to the other great scandal of the electoral process. It's time this country had decent, effective vote control."

How right Christopher is. Voting has proliferated in the United States, and it has reached a point where there is now almost one vote available per citizen over the age of eighteen. About half of all Americans with a vote have used it in previous elections, often with tragic results. Think of the list of prominent Americans cut down in their prime by the vote: Hubert Humphrey, Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, Walter Mondale, Michael Dukakis, George Herbert Walker Bush, Bob Dole, and (if you're counting the popular vote) George W. Bush. Virtually all America's votes are unregulated. And even in the few jurisdictions where vote control exists, it often goes unenforced. Witness the 1994 election of Congressman Michael Flanagan, a Republican, in Cook County, Illinois.

Of course, no one wants to ban the vote. Voting should remain available for sporting and recreational purposes. But certain types of votes clearly should be curtailed—"assault votes," for example, in which the only purpose of the vote is to harm others. One thinks of the angry, impulsive voters of Youngstown, Ohio,

senselessly returning James Traficant to Congress. And although we hear a great deal about campaigns' being too expensive, there is an equal concern that candidates themselves will be cheap and dangerously unreliable. So-called "First-Tuesday-in-November Nothing-Specials" should be banned. As should imports of low-quality candidates from foreign sources. Hillary Clinton in New York State comes to mind. And extra penalties should be meted out for crimes committed with a vote, such as the Volstead Act and the law that makes flush toilets not flush a damn thing.

The League of Women Voters, Rock the Vote, leaders of local get-out-the-vote campaigns, and other members of the pro-vote lobby would have us believe that the "right to vote" is somehow a sacred part of the American system. But constitutional scholars—especially after they've been at the Warren Harding Club for a few hours (Freshen that up for you, Judge Bork?)—agree that there is no absolute constitutional right to vote. The Fifteenth, Nineteenth, Twenty-fourth, and Twenty-sixth Amendments

to the Constitution merely state that possession of the vote cannot be denied on the basis of race, sex, failure to pay a poll tax, or having pierced eyebrows, listening to Tori Amos, and wearing pants that expose the midriff down to the knees. Otherwise voting qualifications are left to the states, with a Fourteenth Amendment provision that, to the extent that states limit the vote, congressional representation shall be reduced proportionately. If California had simply restricted its franchise to adults who can go ten minutes without talking about themselves, California would have no congressmen, and the whole gruesome Gary Condit scenario would never have occurred.

In fact, contrary to the supposed constitutional prohibition of vote control, every state in the Union except North Dakota practices voter registration. From there it is a small step to requiring background checks and instituting sensible waiting periods. Imagine how happy the family of Al Gore would be today if Palm Beach County voters had had a chance to pause and reflect and remember who Pat Buchanan is before marking their ballots.

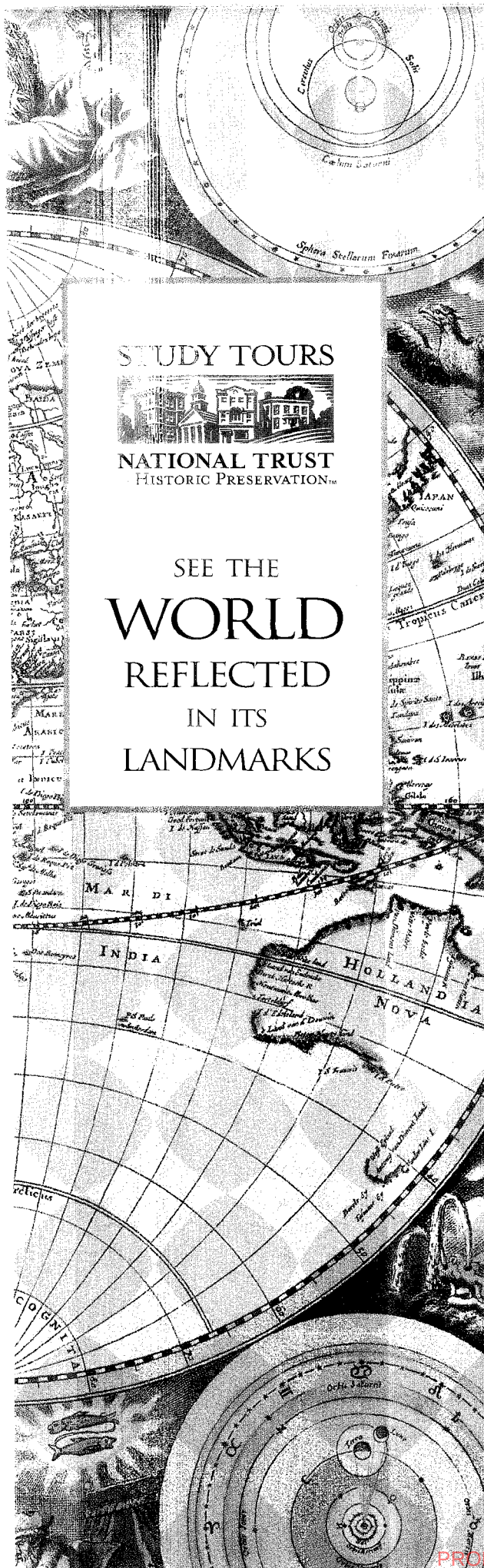
Every vote should carry a serial number, so that responsibility for harmful or careless use of the vote can be traced. Concealed voting should be outlawed. No secure society is possible when we cannot know which of the people we encounter in public places might suddenly vote for H. Ross Perot.

And even toy votes must be kept out of the hands of children. Nothing has been more destructive to the fabric of American life than universal what's-for-dinner suffrage and majority control of the TV remote. No nation can prosper on Lucky Charms alone, or by allowing SpongeBob SquarePants to pre-empt NBA play-offs. Childproof channel-changer locks are an immediate imperative.

Christopher and I hope all of you will join us in this worthy, bipartisan campaign to make Americans safe from voting—especially those Americans who are our inside-the-Beltway political pals, journalistic sources, and fellow members of the Warren Harding Club, all of whom happen to be incumbents. ▀

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Why won't South Korea let North Korea's highest-level defector speak out?

.....

In February of 1997 an elderly North Korean government official named Hwang Jong Yop walked into the South Korean embassy in Beijing and demanded political asylum. At the time, Hwang was the Secretary of North Korea's Workers' Party and a tutor to its reclusive leader, Kim Jong Il. He also happened to be the highest-ranking official ever to have defected from North Korea. He was widely suspected of knowing about Pyongyang's nuclear-weapons program and the power struggles rumored to be taking place at the top levels of North Korean leadership.

Given the generally close relationship between the United States and South Korea, Hwang's defection seemed to promise the United States unprecedented access to inside information about North Korea and Kim Jong Il—and indeed, after his defection Hwang said publicly that he wanted to share information with the United States. Surprisingly, however, South Korea has kept Hwang tightly confined and hidden away by agents of Section Five, the division of South Korea's intelligence agency that is charged with handling senior North Korean defectors. Hwang is rarely allowed to meet with foreigners, and even then he can do so only with minders present. Not long after arriving in Seoul he met with U.S. intelligence officials, but it's not clear that he feels comfortable talking openly about anything in the presence of South Korean agents. The meeting with U.S. officials yielded little new information. The South Korean government, responding to congressional invitations in recent years, has said that it will allow Hwang to fly to Washington and testify before Congress, possibly in formal hearings, but it has yet to act on its word. The reason for this, it seems, is a political struggle between the two allies over how to deal with North Korea—a struggle that has intensified in the aftermath of George Bush's labeling North Korea part of an axis of evil.

Some in Seoul and Washington attribute the muzzling of Hwang to

South Korean President Kim Dae Jung. They say that the President, who has put peaceful engagement with North Korea at the top of his political agenda, fears that Hwang's testimony would embarrass the North Koreans and encourage their isolationism. Others suggest that the ruling party in South Korea—and the President in particular—fear that Hwang is poised to unveil a list of South Korean politicians who have accepted money and support from the North. The

President's allies, for their part, accuse politicians both at home and in Washington of trying to sabotage their overtures of peace to Pyongyang. A spokesman for the South Korean embassy, for example, cites the "potentially harmful effect [Hwang's] appearance in the U.S. might have on the political climate on the Korean peninsula."

No one doubts North Korea's ability to make trouble. It maintains a standing army of some 1.2 million men. Reportedly, it has developed a huge arsenal of biological and chemical weapons, and has the capability to build nuclear bombs, if it hasn't already done so. It has produced ballistic-missile technology that Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Egypt are buying.

Despite hints of an opening of U.S.–North Korean relations during the twilight of the Clinton Administration, America's intelligence community remains remarkably ignorant about Kim Jong Il and his regime. His base of support is said to be deep and shallow. His health is said to be robust and weak. He has been characterized by some as a shrewd tactician and by others as a boozy Strangelovian. So little is known about him, in fact, that many U.S. officials until recently attributed his low profile to a debilitating stutter—a theory dashed in June of 2000, when Kim delivered a welcome address to Kim Dae Jung at the start of a historic summit in Pyongyang.

Conservative U.S. lawmakers—led by Representatives Christopher Cox and Henry Hyde and Senator Jesse Helms—say that South Korea's President is naively trusting of North Korea's good

SEOUL
STEPHEN GLAIN

will, and that his trust threatens the security of South Korea and the 36,000 American soldiers stationed there. To keep Hwang from being heard, some officials in Washington say, Seoul has intentionally misrepresented his wishes. In December of 2000, for example, Suzanne Scholte, the president of the Defense Forum Foundation, based in Falls Church, Virginia, was in Seoul and asked to meet with Hwang, whom she had earlier invited to speak in the United States. Government officials told her that Hwang was too busy writing a book to meet people and did not want to trav-

unofficial and said it would respond only to formal communiqués from the State Department. This past January the State Department's assistant secretary for legislative affairs, Paul Kelly, wrote in a letter to Cox that "the Department will notify the government of the Republic of Korea that the [congressional] invitations represent formal requests to meet with members of Congress and we will encourage the South Korean government to permit Mr. Hwang ... to travel to the U.S."

Seoul once again said no. Hwang issued a statement saying he had no interest in traveling to the United States if his hosts there wanted only to hear about North Korea's weapons program, at the expense of other issues, among them Pyongyang's human-rights record. Rumors that the government had offered to build an institute in his name if he would just stay put—which Hwang denied—circulated in the South Korean press. Cox has since written to assure Hwang that



el to Washington until late 2001. Yet two months later Jesse Helms's office received a letter from Hwang, dated February 12, saying he wished to visit the United States immediately.

When Kim Dae Jung visited Washington in March of last year, Helms appealed directly to him to let Hwang travel to America. Fine, Kim said—as long as the U.S. government could guarantee Hwang's safety. Last July invitations from Helms, Hyde, Cox, and Scholte were taken to Seoul to be hand-delivered to Hwang, but the messengers were told that Hwang wasn't seeing visitors and had no desire to travel to America. But the next day Hwang faxed replies to all four invitations, agreeing to a visit. (Exactly how Hwang was able to access a fax machine is unclear.) The State Department gave assurances that Hwang would be well protected. South Korea then characterized the invitations as

U.S. lawmakers are interested in hearing everything he has to say about North Korea, to which Hwang has replied that he would like to visit the United States but is unable to, for "personal reasons."

Hard-liners in Seoul and Washington say they hope that the next President of South Korea, who is due to be elected later this year, will be tougher on North Korea and will encourage Hwang to speak out. In the meantime, however, Hwang is already showing signs of being worn down by life in the "free" world. Though tightly cloistered, he is occasionally able to spirit out writing that is then published in the press. "I lived many years in vain in North Korea trying to oppose the claim that there was only one absolute genius in the world," he wrote in a newspaper column last July. "But now in the South I am suffering headaches, as there are far too many people who profess they are geniuses." ■



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TALES OF THE TYRANT

What does Saddam Hussein see in himself that no one else in the world seems to see? The answer is perhaps best revealed by the intimate details of the Iraqi leader's daily life

BY MARK BOWDEN

.....

SHAKHSUH (HIS PERSON)

Today is a day in the Grand Battle, the immortal Mother of All Battles. It is a glorious and a splendid day on the part of the self-respecting people of Iraq and their history, and it is the beginning of the great shame for those who ignited its fire on the other part. It is the first day on which the vast military phase of that battle started. Or rather, it is the first day of that battle, since Allah decreed that the Mother of All Battles continue till this day.

—Saddam Hussein, in a televised address to the Iraqi people, January 17, 2002

The tyrant must steal sleep. He must vary the locations and times. He never sleeps in his palaces. He moves from secret bed to secret bed. Sleep and a fixed routine are among the few luxuries denied him. It is too dangerous to be predictable, and whenever he shuts his eyes, the nation drifts. His iron grip slackens. Plots congeal in the shadows. For those hours he must trust someone, and nothing is more dangerous to the tyrant than trust.

Saddam Hussein, the Anointed One, Glorious Leader, Direct Descendant of the Prophet, President of Iraq, Chairman of its Revolutionary Command Council, field marshal of its armies, doctor of its laws, and Great Uncle to all its peoples, rises at about three in the morning. He sleeps only four or five hours a night. When he rises, he swims. All his palaces and homes have pools. Water is a symbol of wealth and power in a desert country like Iraq, and Saddam splashes it everywhere—fountains and pools, indoor streams and waterfalls. It is a theme in all his buildings. His pools are tended scrupulously and tested hourly, more to keep the temperature and the chlorine and pH levels comfortable than to detect some poison that might attack him through his pores, eyes, mouth, nose, ears, penis, or anus—although that worry is always there too.

He has a bad back, a slipped disk, and swimming helps. It also keeps him trim and fit. This satisfies his vanity, which

is epic, but fitness is critical for other reasons. He is now sixty-five, an old man, but because his power is grounded in fear, not affection, he cannot be seen to age. The tyrant cannot afford to become stooped, frail, and gray. Weakness invites challenge, coup d'état. One can imagine Saddam urging himself through a fixed number of laps each morning, pushing to exceed the number he swam the previous year, as if time could be undone by effort and will. Death is an enemy he cannot defeat—only, perhaps, delay. So he works. He also disassembles. He dyes his gray hair black and avoids using his reading glasses in public. When he is to give a speech, his aides print it out in huge letters, just a few lines per page. Because his back problem forces him to walk with a slight limp, he avoids being seen or filmed walking more than a few steps.

He is long-limbed, with big, strong hands. In Iraq the size of a man still matters, and Saddam is impressive. At six feet two he towers over his shorter, plumper aides. He lacks natural grace but has acquired a certain elegance of manner, the way a country boy learns to match the right tie with the right suit. His weight fluctuates between about 210 and 220 pounds, but in his custom-tailored suits the girth isn't always easy to see. His paunch shows when he takes off his suit coat. Those who watch him carefully know he has a tendency to lose weight in times of crisis and to gain it rapidly when things are going well.

Fresh food is flown in for him twice a week—lobster, shrimp, and fish, lots of lean meat, plenty of dairy products. The shipments are sent first to his nuclear scientists, who x-ray them and test them for radiation and poison. The food is then prepared for him by European-trained chefs, who work under the supervision of al Himaya, Saddam's personal bodyguards. Each of his more than twenty palaces is fully staffed, and three meals a day are cooked for him at every one; security demands that palaces from which he is absent perform an elaborate pantomime each day, as if he

were in residence. Saddam tries to regulate his diet, allotting servings and portions the way he counts out the laps in his pools. For a big man he usually eats little, picking at his meals, often leaving half the food on his plate. Sometimes he eats dinner at restaurants in Baghdad, and when he does, his security staff invades the kitchen, demanding that the pots and pans, dishware, and utensils be well scrubbed, but otherwise interfering little. Saddam appreciates the culinary arts. He prefers fish to meat, and eats a lot of fresh fruits and vegetables. He likes wine with his meals, though he is hardly an oenophile; his wine of choice is Mateus rosé. But even though he indulges only in moderation, he is careful not to let anyone outside his most trusted circle of family and aides see him drinking. Alcohol is forbidden by Islam, and in public Saddam is a dutiful son of the faith.

He has a tattoo on his right hand, three dark-blue dots in a line near the wrist. These are given to village children when they are only five or six years old, a sign of their rural, tribal roots. Girls are often marked on their chins, forehead, or cheeks (as was Saddam's mother). For those who, like Saddam, move to the cities and come up in life, the tattoos are a sign of humble origin, and some later have them removed, or fade them with bleach until they almost disappear. Saddam's have faded, but apparently just from age; although he claims descent from the prophet Muhammad, he has never disguised his humble birth.

The President-for-life spends long hours every day in his office—whichever office he and his security minders select. He meets with his ministers and generals, solicits their opinions, and keeps his own counsel. He steals short naps during the day. He will abruptly leave a meeting, shut himself off in a side room, and return refreshed a half hour later. Those who meet with the President have no such luxury. They must stay awake and alert at all times. In 1986, during the Iran-Iraq war, Saddam caught Lieutenant General Aladin al-Janabi dozing during a meeting. He stripped the general of his rank and threw him out of the army. It was years before al-Janabi was able to win back his position and favor.

Saddam's desk is always immaculate. Reports from his various department heads are stacked neatly, each a detailed accounting of recent accomplishments and spending topped by an executive summary. Usually he reads only the summaries, but he selects some reports for closer examination. No one knows which will be chosen for scrutiny. If the details of the full report tell a story different from the summary, or if Saddam is confused, he will summon the department head. At these meetings Saddam is always polite and calm. He rarely raises his voice. He enjoys showing off

a mastery of every aspect of his realm, from crop rotation to nuclear fission. But these meetings can be terrifying when he uses them to cajole, upbraid, or interrogate his subordinates. Often he arranges a surprise visit to some lower-level office or laboratory or factory—although, given the security preparations necessary, word of his visits outraces his arrival. Much of what he sees from his offices and on his “surprise” inspections is doctored and full of lies. Saddam has been fed unrealistic information for so long that his expectations are now also uniformly unrealistic. His bureaucrats scheme mightily to maintain the illusions. So Saddam usually sees only what those around him want him to see, which is, by definition, what he wants to see. A stupid man in this position would believe he had created a perfect world. But Saddam is not stupid. He knows he is being deceived, and he complains about it.

He reads voraciously—on subjects from physics to romance—and has broad interests. He has a particular passion for Arabic history and military history. He likes books about great men, and he admires Winston Churchill, whose famous political career is matched by his prodigious literary output. Saddam has literary aspirations himself. He employs

ghostwriters to keep up a ceaseless flow of speeches, articles, and books of history and philosophy; his oeuvre includes fiction as well. In recent years he appears to have written and published two romantic fables, *Zabibah and the King* and *The Fortified Castle*; a

He enjoys movies, particularly those involving intrigue, assassination, and conspiracy—*The Day of the Jackal*, *The Conversation*, *Enemy of the State*. They inform his ideas about the world.

third, as-yet-untitled work of fiction is due out soon. Before publishing the books Saddam distributes them quietly to professional writers in Iraq for comments and suggestions. No one dares to be candid—the writing is said to be woefully amateurish, marred by a stern pedantic strain—but everyone tries to be helpful, sending him gentle suggestions for minor improvements. The first two novels were published under a rough Arabic equivalent of “Anonymous” that translates as “Written by He Who Wrote It,” but the new book may bear Saddam's name.

Saddam likes to watch TV, monitoring the Iraqi stations he controls and also CNN, Sky, al Jazeera, and the BBC. He enjoys movies, particularly those involving intrigue, assassination, and conspiracy—*The Day of the Jackal*, *The Conversation*, *Enemy of the State*. Because he has not traveled extensively, such movies inform his ideas about the world and feed his inclination to believe broad conspiracy theories. To him the world is a puzzle that only fools accept at face value. He also appreciates movies with more literary themes. Two of his favorites are *The Godfather* series and *The Old Man and the Sea*.

Saddam can be charming, and has a sense of humor

about himself. "He told a hilarious story on television," says Khidhir Hamza, a scientist who worked on Iraq's nuclear-weapons project before escaping to the West. "He is an excellent storyteller, the kind who acts out the story with gestures and facial expressions. He described how he had once found himself behind enemy lines in the war with Iran. He had been traveling along the front lines, paying surprise visits, when the Iranian line launched an offensive and effectively cut off his position. The Iranians, of course, had no idea that Saddam was there. The way he told the story, it wasn't boastful or self-congratulatory. He didn't claim to have fought his way out. He said he was scared. Of the troops at his position, he said, 'They just left me!' He repeated 'Just left me!' in a way that was humorous. Then he described how he hid with his pistol, watching the action until his own forces retook the position and he was again on safe ground. 'What can a pistol do in the middle of battle?' he asked. It was charming, extremely charming."

General Wafic Samarai, who served as Saddam's chief of intelligence during the eight-year Iran-Iraq war (and who, after falling out of favor in the wake of the Persian Gulf War, walked for thirty hours through the rugged north of Iraq to escape the country), concurs: "It is pleasant to sit and talk to him. He is serious, and meetings with him can get tense, but you don't get intimidated unless he wants to intimidate you. When he asks for your opinion, he listens very carefully and doesn't interrupt. Likewise, he gets irritated if you interrupt him. 'Let me finish!' he will say sharply."

Saddam has been advised by his doctors to walk at least two hours a day. He rarely manages that much time, but he breaks up his days with strolls. He used to take these walks in public, swooping down with his entourage on neighborhoods in Baghdad, his bodyguards clearing sidewalks and streets as the tyrant passed. Anyone who approached him unsolicited was beaten nearly to death. But now it is too dangerous to walk in public—and the limp must not be seen. So Saddam makes no more unscripted public appearances. He limps freely behind the high walls and patrolled fences of his vast estates. Often he walks with a gun, hunting deer or rabbit in his private preserves. He is an excellent shot.

Saddam has been married for nearly forty years. His wife, Sajida, is his first cousin on his mother's side and the daughter of Khairallah Tulfah, Saddam's uncle and first

political mentor. Sajida has borne him two sons and three daughters, and remains loyal to him, but he has long had relationships with other women. Stories circulate about his nightly selecting young virgins for his bed, like the Sultan Shahryar in *The Thousand and One Nights*, about his having fathered a child with a longtime mistress, and even about his having killed one young woman after a kinky tryst. It is hard to sort the truth from the lies. So many people, in and out of Iraq, hate Saddam that any disgraceful or embarrassing rumor is likely to be embraced, believed, repeated, and written down in the Western press as truth. Those who know him best scoff at the wildest of these tales.

"Saddam has personal relationships with women, but these stories of rape and murder are lies," Samarai says. "He is not that kind of person. He is very careful about himself in everything he does. He is fastidious and very proper, and never wants to give the wrong impression. But he is occasionally attracted to other women, and he has formed relationships with them. They are not the kind of women who would ever talk about him."

Saddam is a loner by nature, and power increases isolation. A young man without power or money is completely free. He has nothing, but he also has everything. He can travel, he can drift. He can make new acquaintances every day, and try to soak up the infinite variety of life. He can seduce and be seduced, start an enterprise and abandon it, join an army or

flee a nation, fight to preserve an existing system or plot a revolution. He can reinvent himself daily, according to the discoveries he makes about the world and himself. But if he prospers through the choices he makes, if he acquires a wife, children, wealth, land, and power, his options gradually and inevitably diminish. Responsibility and commitment limit his moves. One might think that the most powerful man has the most choices, but in reality he has the fewest. Too much depends on his every move. The tyrant's choices are the narrowest of all. His life—the nation!—hangs in the balance. He can no longer drift or explore, join or flee. He cannot reinvent himself, because so many others depend on him—and he, in turn, must depend on so many others. He stops learning, because he is walled in by fortresses and palaces, by generals and ministers who rarely dare to tell him what he doesn't wish to hear. Power gradually shuts the tyrant off from the world. Everything comes to him second or third hand. He is deceived daily. He becomes ignorant of his land,



Satellite photo of Saddam's Baghdad al-Salam Palace

SOURCE OF PHOTOS: CORBIS. PHOTO MANIPULATIONS BY MARC YANKUS

his people, even his own family. He exists, finally, only to preserve his wealth and power, to build his legacy. Survival becomes his one overriding passion. So he regulates his diet, tests his food for poison, exercises behind well-patrolled walls, trusts no one, and tries to control everything.

Major Sabah Khalifa Khodada, a career officer in the Iraqi army, was summoned from his duties as assistant to the commander of a terrorist training camp on January 1, 1996, for an important meeting. It was nighttime. He drove to his command center at Alswayra, southwest of Baghdad, where he and some other military officers were told to strip to their underwear. They removed their clothing, watches, and rings, and handed over their wallets. The clothing was then laundered, sterilized, and x-rayed. Each of the officers, in his underwear, was searched and passed through a metal detector. Each was instructed to wash his hands in a disinfecting permanganate solution.

They then dressed, and were transported in buses with blackened windows, so that they could not see where they were going. They were driven for a half hour or more, and then were searched again as they filed off. They had arrived at an official-looking building. Khodada did not know where. After a time they were taken into a meeting room and seated at a large round table. Then they were told that they were to be given a great honor: the President himself would be meeting with them. They were instructed not to talk, just to listen. When Saddam entered, they were to rise and show him respect. They were not to approach or touch him. For all but his closest aides, the protocol for meeting with the dictator is simple. He dictates.

"Don't interrupt," they were told. "Don't ask questions or make any requests."

Each man was given a pad of paper and a pencil, and instructed to take notes. Tea in a small glass cup was placed before each man and at the empty seat at the head of the table.

When Saddam appeared, they all rose. He stood before his chair and smiled at them. Wearing his military uniform, decorated with medals and gold epaulets, he looked fit, impressive, and self-assured. When he sat, everyone sat. Saddam did not reach for his tea, so the others in the room didn't touch theirs. He told Khodada and the others that they were the best men in the nation, the most trusted and able. That was why they had been selected to meet with him, and to work at the terrorist camps where warriors were being trained to strike back at America. The United States, he said, because of its reckless treatment of Arab nations and the Arab people, was a necessary target for revenge and destruction. American aggression must be stopped in order for Iraq to rebuild and to resume leadership of the Arab world. Saddam talked for almost two hours. Khodada could sense the great hatred in him, the anger over what America

had done to his ambitions and to Iraq. Saddam blamed the United States for all the poverty, backwardness, and suffering in his country.

Khodada took notes. He glanced around the room. Few of the others, he concluded, were buying what Saddam told them. These were battle-hardened men of experience from all over the nation. Most had fought in the war with Iran and the Persian Gulf War. They had few illusions about Saddam, his regime, or the troubles of their country. They coped daily with real problems in cities and military camps all over Iraq. They could have told Saddam a lot. But nothing would pass from them to the tyrant. Not one word, not one microorganism.

The meeting had been designed to allow communication in only one direction, and even in this it failed. Saddam's speech was meaningless to his listeners. Khodada despised him, and suspected that others in the room did too. The major knew he was no coward, but, like many of the other military men there, he was filled with fear. He was afraid to make a wrong move, afraid he might accidentally draw attention to himself, do something unscripted. He was grateful that he felt no urge to sneeze, sniffle, or cough.

When the meeting was over, Saddam simply left the room. The teacups had not been touched. The men were then returned to the buses and driven back to Alswayra, from which they drove back to their camps or homes. The meeting with Saddam had meant nothing. The notes they had been ordered to take were worthless. It was as if they had briefly visited a fantasy zone with no connection to their own world.

They had stepped into the world of the tyrant.

TUMOOH (AMBITION)

The Iraqis knew that they had the potential, but they did not know how to muster up that potential. Their rulers did not take the responsibility on the basis of that potential. The leader and the guide who was able to put that potential on its right course had not yet emerged from amongst them. Even when some had discovered that potential, they did not know how to deal with it. Nor did they direct it where it should be directed so as to enable it to evolve into an effective act that could make life pulsate and fill hearts with happiness.

—Saddam Hussein, in a speech to the Iraqi people, July 17, 2000

In Saddam's village, al-Awja, just east of Tikrit, in north-central Iraq, his clan lived in houses made of mud bricks and flat, mud-covered wooden roofs. The land is dry, and families eke out a living growing wheat and vegetables. Saddam's clan was called al-Khatatab, and they were known to be violent and clever. Some viewed them as con men and thieves, recalls Salah Omar al-Ali, who grew up in Tikrit and came to know Saddam well in later life. Those who still support Saddam may see him as Saladinesque, as a great pan-Arab

leader; his enemies may see him as Stalinesque, a cruel dictator; but to al-Ali, Saddam will always be just an al-Khatab, acting out a family pattern on a much, much larger stage.

Al-Ali fixed tea for me in his home in suburban London last January. He is elegant, frail, gray, and pale, a man of quiet dignity and impeccable manners who gestures delicately with long-fingered hands as he speaks. He was the Information Minister of Iraq when, in 1969, Saddam (the real power in the ruling party), in part to demonstrate his displeasure over Arab defeats in the Six-Day War, announced that a Zionist plot had been discovered, and publicly hanged fourteen alleged plotters, among them nine Iraqi Jews; their bodies were left hanging in Baghdad's Liberation Square for more than a day. Al-Ali defended this atrocity in his own country and to the rest of the world. Today he is just one of many exiled or expatriated former Iraqi government officials, an old socialist who served the revolutionary pan-Arab Baath Party and Saddam until running afoul of the Great Uncle. Al-Ali would have one believe that his conscience drove him into exile, but one suspects he has fretted little in his life about human rights. He showed me the faded dot tattoos on his hand which might have been put there by the same Tikriti who gave Saddam his.

Although al-Ali was familiar with the al-Khatab family, he did not meet Saddam himself until the mid-sixties, when they were both socialist revolutionaries plotting to overthrow the tottering government of General Abd al-Rahman Arif. Saddam was a tall, thin young man with a thick mop of curly black hair. He had recently escaped from prison, after being caught in a failed attempt to assassinate Arif's predecessor. The attempt, the arrest, the imprisonment, had all added to Saddam's revolutionary luster. He was an impressive combination: not just a tough capable of commanding respect from the thugs who did the Baath Party's dirty work, but also well-read, articulate, and seemingly open-minded; a man of action who also understood policy; a natural leader who could steer Iraq into a new era. Al-Ali met the young fugitive at a café near Baghdad University. Saddam arrived in a Volkswagen Beetle and stepped out in a well-cut gray suit. These were exciting times for both men. The intoxicating aroma of change was in the air, and prospects for their party were good. Saddam was pleased to meet a fellow Tikriti. "He listened to me for a long time," al-Ali recalled. "We discussed the party's plans, how to organize nationally. The issues were complicated, but it was clear that he understood them very well. He was serious, and took a number of my suggestions. I was impressed with him."

The party seized control in 1968, and Saddam imme-

diately became the real power behind his cousin Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr, the president and chairman of the new Revolutionary Command Council. Al-Ali was a member of that council. He was responsible for the north-central part of Iraq, including his home village. It was in Tikrit that he started to see Saddam's larger plan unfold. Saddam's relatives in al-Awja were throwing their newly ascendant kinsman's name around, seizing farms, ordering people off their land. That was how things worked in the villages. If a family was lucky, it produced a strongman, a patriarch, who by guile, strength, or violence accumulated riches for his clan. Saddam was now a strongman, and his family was moving to claim the spoils. This was all ancient stuff. The Baath philosophy was far more egalitarian. It emphasized working with Arabs in other countries to rebuild the entire region, sharing property and wealth, seeking a better life for all. In this political climate Saddam's family was a throwback. The local party chiefs complained bitterly, and al-Ali took their complaints to his powerful young friend. "It's a small problem," Saddam said. "These are simple people. They don't understand our larger aims. I'll take care of it." Two, three, four times al-Ali went to Saddam, because the problem didn't go away.

Every time it was the same: "I'll take care of it."

It finally occurred to al-Ali that the al-Khatab family was doing exactly what Saddam wanted them to do. This seemingly modern, educated young villager was not primarily interested in helping the party achieve

its idealistic aims; rather, he was using the party to help him achieve his. Suddenly al-Ali saw that the polish, the fine suits, the urbane tastes, civilized manner, and the socialist rhetoric were a pose. The real story of Saddam was right there in the tattoo on his right hand. He was a true son of Tikrit, a clever al-Khatab, and he was now much more than the patriarch of his clan.

Saddam's rise through the ranks may have been slow and deceitful, but when he moved to seize power, he did so very openly. He had been serving as vice-chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council, and as Vice President of Iraq, and he planned to step formally into the top positions. Some of the party leadership, including men who had been close to Saddam for years, had other ideas. Rather than just hand him the reins, they had begun advocating a party election. So Saddam took action. He staged his ascendancy like theater.

On July 18, 1979, he invited all the members of the Revolutionary Command Council and hundreds of other party leaders to a conference hall in Baghdad. He had a video camera running in the back of the hall to record the event

When all of the sixty "traitors" had been removed, Saddam again took the podium and wiped tears from his eyes as he repeated the names of those who had betrayed him.

for posterity. Wearing his military uniform, he walked slowly to the lectern and stood behind two microphones, gesturing with a big cigar. His body and broad face seemed weighted down with sadness. There had been a betrayal, he said. A Syrian plot. There were traitors among them. Then Saddam took a seat, and Muhyi Abd al-Hussein Mashhadi, the secretary-general of the Command Council, appeared from behind a curtain to confess his own involvement in the putsch. He had been secretly arrested and tortured days before; now he spilled out dates, times, and places where the plotters had met. Then he started naming names. As he fingered members of the audience one by one, armed guards grabbed the accused and escorted them from the hall. When one man shouted that he was innocent, Saddam shouted back, "*Illa! Illa!*"—"Get out! Get out!" (Weeks later, after secret trials, Saddam had the mouths of the accused taped shut so that they could utter no troublesome last words before their firing squads.) When all of the sixty "traitors" had been removed, Saddam again took the podium and wiped tears from his eyes as he repeated the names of those who had betrayed him. Some in the audience, too, were crying—perhaps out of fear. This chilling performance had the desired effect. Everyone in the hall now understood exactly how things would work in Iraq from that day forward. The audience rose and began clapping, first in small groups and finally as one. The session ended with cheers and laughter. The remaining "leaders"—about 300 in all—left the hall shaken, grateful to have avoided the fate of their colleagues, and certain that one man now controlled the destiny of their entire nation. Videotapes of the purge were circulated throughout the country.

It was what the world would come to see as classic Saddam. He tends to commit his crimes in public, cloaking them in patriotism and in effect turning his witnesses into accomplices. The purge that day reportedly resulted in the executions of a third of the Command Council. (Mashhadi's performance didn't spare him; he, too, was executed.) During the next few weeks scores of other "traitors" were shot, including government officials, military officers, and people turned in by ordinary citizens who responded to a hotline phone number broadcast on Iraqi TV. Some Council members say that Saddam ordered members of the party's inner circle to participate in this bloodbath.

While he served as vice-chairman, from 1968 to 1979, the party's goals had seemed to be Saddam's own. That was a relatively good period for Iraq, thanks to Saddam's blunt effectiveness as an administrator. He orchestrated a draconian nationwide literacy project. Reading programs were set up in every city and village, and failure to attend was punishable by three years in jail. Men, women, and children attended these compulsory classes, and hundreds of thousands of illiterate Iraqis learned to read. UNESCO gave Saddam an award. There were also ambitious drives to build schools, roads, public housing, and hospitals. Iraq

created one of the best public-health systems in the Middle East. There was admiration in the West during those years, for Saddam's accomplishments if not for his methods. After the Islamic fundamentalist revolution in Iran, and the seizure of the U.S. embassy in Tehran in 1979, Saddam seemed to be the best hope for secular modernization in the region.

Today all these programs are a distant memory. Within two years of his seizing full power, Saddam's ambitions turned to conquest, and his defeats have ruined the nation. His old party allies in exile now see his support for the social-welfare programs as an elaborate deception. The broad ambitions for the Iraqi people were the party's, they say. As long as he needed the party, Saddam made its programs his own. But his single, overriding goal throughout was to establish his own rule.

"In the beginning the Baath Party was made up of the intellectual elite of our generation," says Hamed al-Jubouri, a former Command Council member who now lives in London. "There were many professors, physicians, economists, and historians—really the nation's elite. Saddam was charming and impressive. He appeared to be totally different from what we learned he was afterward. He took all of us in. We supported him because he seemed uniquely capable of controlling a difficult country like Iraq, a difficult people like our people. We wondered about him. How could such a young man, born in the countryside north of Baghdad, become such a capable leader? He seemed both intellectual and practical. But he was hiding his real self. For years he did this, building his power quietly, charming everyone, hiding his true instincts. He has a great ability to hide his intentions; it may be his greatest skill. I remember his son Uday said one time, 'My father's right shirt pocket doesn't know what is in his left shirt pocket.'"

What does Saddam want? By all accounts, he is not interested in money. This is not the case with other members of his family. His wife, Sajida, is known to have gone on million-dollar shopping sprees in New York and London, back in the days of Saddam's good relations with the West. Uday drives expensive cars and wears custom-tailored suits of his own design. Saddam himself isn't a hedonist; he lives a well-regulated, somewhat abstemious existence. He seems far more interested in fame than in money, desiring above all to be admired, remembered, and revered. A nineteen-volume official biography is mandatory reading for Iraqi government officials, and Saddam has also commissioned a six-hour film about his life, called *The Long Days*, which was edited by Terence Young, best known for directing three James Bond films. Saddam told his official biographer that he isn't interested in what people think of him today, only in what they will think of him in five hundred years. The root of Saddam's bloody, single-minded pursuit of power appears to be simple vanity.

But what extremes of vanity compel a man to jail or execute all who criticize or oppose him? To erect giant statues



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of himself to adorn the public spaces of his country? To commission romantic portraits, some of them twenty feet high, portraying the nation's Great Uncle as a desert horseman, a wheat-cutting peasant, or a construction worker carrying bags of cement? To have the nation's television, radio, film, and print devoted to celebrating his every word and deed? Can ego alone explain such displays? Might it be the opposite? What colossal insecurity and self-loathing would demand such compensation?

The sheer scale of the tyrant's deeds mocks psychoanalysis. What begins with ego and ambition becomes a political movement. Saddam embodies first the party and then the nation. Others conspire in this process in order to further their own ambitions, selfless as well as selfish. Then the tyrant turns on them. His cult of self becomes more than a political strategy. Repetition of his image in heroic or paternal poses, repetition of his name, his slogans, his virtues, and his accomplishments, seeks to make his power seem inevitable, unchallengeable. Finally he is praised not out of affection or admiration but out of obligation. One *must* praise him.

Saad al-Bazzaz was summoned to meet with Saddam in 1989. He was then the editor of Baghdad's largest daily newspaper and the head of the ministry that oversees all of Iraq's TV and radio programming. Al-Bazzaz took the phone call in his office. "The President wants to ask you something," Saddam's secretary said.

Al-Bazzaz thought nothing of it. He is a short, round, garrulous man with thinning hair and big glasses. He had known Saddam for years, and had always been in good odor. The first time Saddam had asked to meet him had been more than fifteen years earlier, when Saddam was vice-chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council. The Baath Party was generating a lot of excitement, and Saddam was its rising star. At the time, al-Bazzaz was a twenty-five-year-old writer who had just published his first collection of short stories and had also written articles for Baghdad newspapers. That first summons from Saddam had been a surprise. Why would the vice-chairman want to meet with him? Al-Bazzaz had a low opinion of political officials, but as soon as they met, this one struck him as different. Saddam told al-Bazzaz that he had read some of his articles and was impressed by them. He said he knew of his book of short stories, and had heard they were very good. The young

writer was flattered. Saddam asked him what writers he admired, and after listening to al-Bazzaz, told him, "When I was in prison, I read all of Ernest Hemingway's novels. I particularly like *The Old Man and the Sea*." Al-Bazzaz thought, *This is something new for Iraq—a politician who reads real literature*. Saddam peppered him with questions at that meeting, and listened with rapt attention. This, too, al-Bazzaz thought was extraordinary.

By 1989 much had changed. Saddam's regime had long since abandoned the party's early, idealistic aims, and al-Bazzaz no longer saw the dictator as an open-minded man of learning and refinement. But he had prospered personally under Saddam's reign. His growing government responsibilities left him no time to write, but he had become an important man in Iraq. He saw himself as someone who advanced the cause of artists and journalists, as a force for liberalization in the country. Since the end of the war with Iran, the previous year, there had been talk of loosening controls on the media and the arts in Iraq, and al-Bazzaz had lobbied quietly in favor of this. But he wasn't one to press too hard, so he had no worries as he drove the several miles from his office to the Tashreeya area of Baghdad, near the old Cabinet Building, where an emissary from the President met him and instructed him to leave his car. The emissary drove al-Bazzaz in silence to a large villa nearby. Inside, guards searched him and showed him to a sofa, where he waited for half an



War memorial: sword held aloft by Saddam's hand

hour as people came and went from the President's office. When it was his turn, he was handed a pad and a pencil, reminded to speak only if Saddam asked a direct question, and then ushered in. It was noon. Saddam was wearing a military uniform. Staying seated behind his desk, Saddam did not approach al-Bazzaz or even offer to shake his hand.

"How are you?" the President asked.

"Fine," al-Bazzaz replied. "I am here to listen to your instructions."

Saddam complained about an Egyptian comedy show that had been airing on one of the TV channels: "It is silly, and we shouldn't show it to our people." Al-Bazzaz made a note. Then Saddam brought up something else. It was the practice for poems and songs written in praise of him to be aired daily on TV. In recent weeks al-Bazzaz had urged his producers to be more selective. Most of the work was amateurish—ridiculous doggerel written by unskilled poets. His staff was happy to oblige. Paeans to the President were

still aired every day, but not as many since al-Bazzaz had changed the policy.

"I understand," Saddam said, "that you are not allowing some of the songs that carry my name to be broadcast."

Al-Bazzaz was stunned, and suddenly frightened. "Mr. President," he said, "we still broadcast the songs, but I have stopped some of them because they are so poorly written. They are rubbish."

"Look," Saddam said, abruptly stern, "you are not a judge, Saad."

"Yes. I am not a judge."

"How can you prevent people from expressing their feelings toward me?"

Al-Bazzaz feared that he was going to be taken away and shot. He felt the blood drain from his face, and his heart pounded heavily. The editor said nothing. The pencil shook in his hand. Saddam had not even raised his voice.

"No, no, no. You are not the judge of these things," Saddam reiterated.

Al-Bazzaz kept repeating, "Yes, sir," and frantically wrote down every word the President said. Saddam then talked about the movement for more freedoms in the press and the arts. "There will be no loosening of controls," he said.

"Yes, sir."

"Okay, fine. Now it is all clear to you?"

"Yes, sir."

With that Saddam dismissed al-Bazzaz. The editor had sweated through his shirt and sport coat. He was driven back to the Cabinet Building, and then drove himself back to the office, where he immediately rescinded his earlier policy. That evening a full broadcast of the poems and songs dedicated to Saddam resumed.

HADAFUH (HIS GOAL)

You are the fountain of willpower and the wellspring of life, the essence of earth, the sabers of demise, the pupil of the eye, and the twitch of the eyelid. A people like you cannot but be, with God's help. So be as you are, and as we are determined to be. Let all cowards, piggish people, traitors, and betrayers be debased.

—Saddam Hussein, addressing the Iraqi people, July 17, 2001

Iraq is a land of antiquity. It is called the Land of Two Rivers (the Tigris and the Euphrates); the land of Sumerian kings, Mesopotamia, and Babylon; one of the cradles of civilization. Walking the streets of Baghdad gives one a sense of continuity with things long past, of unity with the great sweep of history. Renovating and maintaining the old palaces is an ongoing project in the city. By decree, one of every ten bricks laid in the renovation of an ancient palace is now stamped either with the name Saddam Hussein or with an eight-pointed star (a point for each letter of his name spelled in Arabic).

In 1987 Entifadh Qanbar was assigned to work on the

restoration of the Baghdad Palace, which had once been called al-Zuhoor, or the Flowers Palace. Built in the 1930s for King Ghazi, it is relatively small and very pretty; English in style, it once featured an elaborate evergreen maze. Qanbar is an engineer by training, a short, fit, dark-haired man with olive skin. After earning his degree he served a compulsory term in the army, which turned out to be a five-year stint, and survived the mandatory one-month tour on the front lines in the war with Iran.

Work on the palace had stalled some years earlier, when the British consultant for the project refused to come to Baghdad because of the war. One of Qanbar's first jobs was to supervise construction of a high and ornate brick wall around the palace grounds. Qanbar is a perfectionist, and because the wall was to be decorative as well as functional, he took care with the placement of each brick. An elaborate gate had already been built facing the main road, but Qanbar had not yet built the portions of the wall on either side of it, because the renovation of the palace itself was unfinished, and that way large construction equipment could roll on and off the property without danger of damaging the gate.

One afternoon at about five, as he was preparing to close down work for the day, Qanbar saw a black Mercedes with curtained windows and custom-built running boards pull up to the site. He knew immediately who was in it. Ordinary Iraqis were not allowed to drive such fancy cars. Cars like this one were driven exclusively by al Himaya, Saddam's bodyguards.

The doors opened and several guards stepped out. All of them wore dark-green uniforms, black berets, and zippered boots of reddish-brown leather. They had big moustaches like Saddam's, and carried Kalashnikovs. To the frightened Qanbar, they seemed robotic, without human feelings.

The bodyguards often visited the work site to watch and make trouble. Once, after new concrete had been poured and smoothed, some of them jumped into it, stomping through the patch in their red boots to make sure that no bomb or listening device was hidden there. Another time a workman opened a pack of cigarettes and a bit of foil wrapping fluttered down into the newly poured concrete. One of the guards caught a glimpse of something metallic and reacted as if someone had thrown a hand grenade. Several of them leaped into the concrete and retrieved the scrap. Angered to discover what it was, and to have been made to look foolish, they dragged the offending worker aside and beat him with their weapons. "I have worked all my life!" he cried. They took him away, and he did not return. So the sudden arrival of a black Mercedes was a frightening thing.

"Who is the engineer here?" the chief guard asked. He spoke with the gruff Tikriti accent of his boss. Qanbar stepped up and identified himself. One of the guards wrote down his name. It is a terrible thing to have al Himaya write down your name. In a country ruled by fear, the best way to survive is to draw as little attention to yourself as

possible. To be invisible. Even success can be dangerous, because it makes you stand out. It makes other people jealous and suspicious. It makes you enemies who might, if the opportunity presents itself, bring your name to the attention of the police. For the state to have your name for any reason other than the most conventional ones—school, driver's license, military service—is always dangerous. The actions of the state are entirely unpredictable, and they can take away your career, your freedom, your life. Qanbar's heart sank and his mouth went dry.

"Our Great Uncle just passed by," the chief guard began. "And he said, 'Why is this gate installed when the two walls around it are not built?'"

Qanbar nervously explained that the walls were special, ornamental, and that his crew was saving them for last because of the heavy equipment coming and going. "We want to keep it a clean construction," he said.

"Our Great Uncle is going to pass by again tonight," said the guard. "When he does, it must be finished."

Qanbar was dumbfounded. "How can I do it?" he protested.

"I don't know," said the guard. "But if you don't do it, you will be in trouble." Then he said something that revealed exactly how serious the danger was: "And if you don't do it, we will be in trouble. How can we help?"

There was nothing to do but try. Qanbar dispatched Saddam's men to help round up every member of his crew as fast as they could—those who were not scheduled to work as well as those who had already gone home. Two hundred workers were quickly assembled. They set up floodlights. Some of the guards came back with trucks that had machine guns mounted on top. They parked alongside the work site and set up chairs, watching and urging more speed as the workers mixed mortar and threw down line after line of bricks.

The crew finished at nine-thirty. They had completed in four hours a job that would ordinarily have taken a week. Terror had driven them to work faster and harder than they believed possible. Qanbar and his men were exhausted. An hour later they were still cleaning up the site when the black Mercedes drove up again. The chief guard stepped out. "Our Uncle just passed by, and he thanks you," he said.

Walls define the tyrant's world. They keep his enemies out, but they also block him off from the people he rules. In time he can no longer see out. He loses touch with what is

real and what is unreal, what is possible and what is not—or, as in the case of Qanbar and the wall, what is just barely possible. His ideas of what his power can accomplish, and of his own importance, bleed into fantasy.

Each time Saddam has escaped death—when he survived, with a minor wound to his leg, a failed attempt in 1959 to assassinate Iraqi President Abd al-Karim Qasim; when he avoided the ultimate punishment in 1964 for his part in a failed Baath Party uprising; when he survived being trapped behind Iranian lines in the Iran-Iraq war; when he survived attempted coups d'état; when he survived America's smart-bombing campaign against Baghdad, in 1991; when he survived the nationwide revolt after the Gulf War—it has strengthened his conviction that his path is divinely inspired and that greatness is

his destiny. Because his world view is essentially tribal and patriarchal, destiny means blood. So he has ordered genealogists to construct a plausible family tree linking him to Fatima, the daughter of the prophet Muhammad. (This ancestry is an honor he shares, perhaps, with everyone in the hated West. See "The Royal We," by Steve Olson, in this issue.) Saddam sees the prophet less as the bearer of divine revelation than as a political precursor—a great leader who unified the Arab peoples and inspired a flowering of Arab power and culture. The concocted link of bloodlines to Muhammad is

symbolized by a 600-page hand-lettered copy of the Koran that was written with Saddam's own blood, which he donated a pint at a time over three years. It is now on display in a Baghdad museum.

If Saddam has a religion, it is a belief in the superiority of Arab history and culture, a tradition that he is convinced will rise up again and rattle the world. His imperial view of the grandeur that was Arabia is romantic, replete with fanciful visions of great palaces and wise and powerful sultans and caliphs. His notion of history has nothing to do with progress, with the advance of knowledge, with the evolution of individual rights and liberties, with any of the things that matter most to Western civilization. It has to do simply with power. To Saddam, the present global domination by the West, particularly the United States, is just a phase. America is infidel and inferior. It lacks the rich ancient heritage of Iraq and other Arab states. Its place at the summit of the world powers is just a historical quirk, an aberration,



Baath Party guard

a consequence of its having acquired technological advantages. It cannot endure.

In a speech this past January 17, the eleventh anniversary of the start of the Gulf War, Saddam explained, "The Americans have not yet established a civilization, in the deep and comprehensive sense we give to civilization. What they have established is a metropolis of force ... Some people, perhaps including Arabs and plenty of Muslims and more than these in the wide world ... considered the ascent of the U.S. to the summit as the last scene in the world picture, after which there will be no more summits and no one will try to ascend and sit comfortably there. They considered it the end of the world as they hoped for, or as their scared souls suggested it to them."

Arabia, which Saddam sees as the wellspring of civilization, will one day own that summit again. When that day comes, whether in his lifetime or a century or even five centuries hence, his name will rank with those of the great men in history. Saddam sees himself as an established member of the pantheon of great men—conquerors, prophets, kings and presidents, scholars, poets, scientists. It doesn't matter if he understands their contributions and ideas. It matters only that they are the ones history has remembered and honored for their accomplishments.

In a book titled *Saddam's Bombmaker* (2000), Khidhir Hamza, the nuclear scientist, remembers his first encounter with Saddam, when the future dictator was still nominally the vice-chairman. A large new computer had just been installed in Hamza's lab, and Saddam came sweeping through for a look. He showed little interest in the computer; his attention was drawn instead to a lineup of pictures that Hamza had tacked to the wall, each of a famous scientist, from Copernicus to Einstein. The pictures had been torn from magazines.

"What are those?" Saddam asked.

"Sir, those are the greatest scientists in history," Hamza told him.

Then, as Hamza remembers it, Saddam became angry. "What an insult this is! All these great men, these great scientists! You don't have enough respect for these great men to frame their pictures? You can't honor them better than this?"

To Hamza, the outburst was irrational; the anger was out of all proportion. Hamza interpreted it as Saddam's way of testing him, of putting him in his place. But Saddam seemed somehow *personally* offended. To understand his tantrum one must understand the kinship he feels with the great men of history, with history itself. Lack of reverence for an image of Copernicus might suggest a lack of reverence for Saddam.

In what sense does Saddam see himself as a great man? Saad al-Bazzaz, who defected in 1992, has thought a lot about this question, during his time as a newspaper editor and TV producer in Baghdad, and in the years since, as the publisher of an Arabic newspaper in London.

"I need a piece of paper and a pen," he told me recently in the lobby of Claridge's Hotel. He flattened the paper out on a coffee table and tested the pen. Then he drew a line down the center. "You must understand, the daily behavior is just the result of the mentality," he explained. "Most people would say that the main conflict in Iraqi society is sectarian, between the Sunni and the Shia Muslims. But the big gap has nothing to do with religion. It is between the mentality of the villages and the mentality of the cities."

"Okay. Here is a village." On the right half of the page al-Bazzaz wrote a *V* and beneath it he drew a collection of separate small squares. "These are houses or tents," he said. "Notice there are spaces between them. This is because in the villages each family has its own house, and each house is sometimes several miles from the next one. They are self-contained. They grow their own food and make their own clothes. Those who grow up in the villages are frightened of everything. There is no real law enforcement or civil society. Each family is frightened of each other, and all of them are frightened of outsiders. This is the tribal mind. The only loyalty they know is to their own family, or to their own village. Each of the families is ruled by a patriarch, and the village is ruled by the strongest of them. This loyalty to tribe comes before everything. There are no values beyond power. You can lie, cheat, steal, even kill, and it is okay so long as you are a loyal son of the village or the tribe. Politics for these people is a bloody game, and it is all about getting or holding power."

Al-Bazzaz wrote the word "city" atop the left half of the page. Beneath it he drew a line of adjacent squares. Below that he drew another line, and another. "In the city the old tribal ties are left behind. Everyone lives close together. The state is a big part of everyone's life. They work at jobs and buy their food and clothing at markets and in stores. There are laws, police, courts, and schools. People in the city lose their fear of outsiders, and take an interest in foreign things. Life in the city depends on cooperation, on sophisticated social networks. Mutual self-interest defines public policy. You can't get anything done without cooperating with others, so politics in the city becomes the art of compromise and partnership. The highest goal of politics becomes cooperation, community, and keeping the peace. By definition, politics in the city becomes nonviolent. The backbone of urban politics isn't blood, it's law."

In al-Bazzaz's view, Saddam embodies the tribal mentality. "He is the ultimate Iraqi patriarch, the village leader who has seized a nation," he explained. "Because he has come so far, he feels anointed by destiny. Everything he does is, by definition, the right thing to do. He has been chosen by Heaven to lead. Often in his life he has been saved by God, and each escape makes him more certain of his destiny. In recent years, in his speeches, he has begun using passages and phrases from the Koran, speaking the words as if they are his own. In the Koran, Allah says, 'If

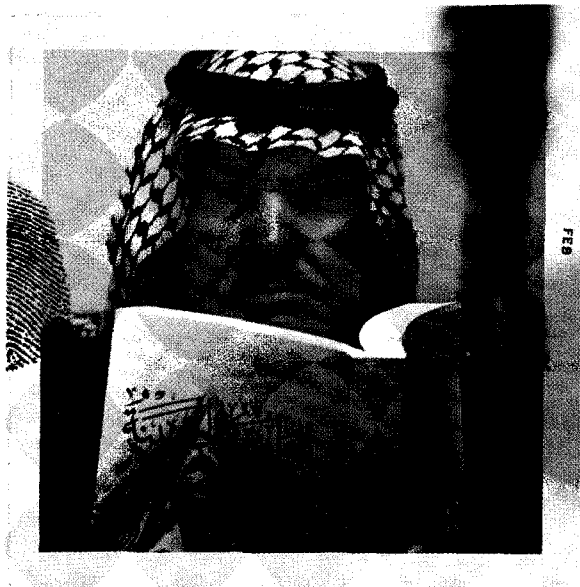
you thank me, I will give you more.' In the early nineties Saddam was on TV, presenting awards to military officers, and he said, 'If you thank me, I will give you more.' He no longer believes he is a normal person. Dialogue with him is impossible because of this. He can't understand why journalists should be allowed to criticize him. How can they criticize the father of the tribe? This is something unacceptable in his mind. To him, strength is everything. To allow criticism or differences of opinion, to negotiate or compromise, to accede to the rule of law or to due process—these are signs of weakness."

Saddam is, of course, not alone in admiring *The Godfather* series. They are obvious movies for him to like (they were also a favorite of the Colombian cocaine tycoon Pablo Escobar). On the surface it is a classic patriarchal tale. Don Vito Corleone builds his criminal empire from nothing, motivated in the main by love for his family. He sees that the world around him is vicious and corrupt, so he outdoes the world at its own cruelty and preys upon its vices, creating an apparent refuge of wealth and safety for himself and his own. We are drawn to his single-mindedness, subtle intelligence, and steadfast loyalty to an ancient code of honor in a changing world—no matter how unforgiving that code seems by modern standards. The *Godfather* suffers greatly but dies playing happily in the garden with his grandson, arguably a successful man. The deeper meaning of the films, however, apparently evades Saddam. *The Godfather* saga is more the story of Michael Corleone than of his father, and the film's message is not a happy one. Michael's obsessive loyalty to his father and to his family, to the ancient code of honor, leads him to destroy the very things it is designed to protect. In the end Michael's family is torn by tragedy and hatred. He orders his own brother killed, choosing loyalty to code over loyalty to family. Michael becomes a tragic figure, isolated and unloved, ensnared by his own power. He is a lot like Saddam.

In Saddam's other favorite movie, *The Old Man and the Sea*, the old man, played by Spencer Tracy, hooks a great fish and fights alone in his skiff to haul it in. It is easy to see why Saddam would be stirred by the image of a lone fisherman, surrounded by a great ocean, struggling to land this impossible fish. "I will show him what a man can do and what a man endures," the old man says. In the end he succeeds, but the

fish is too large for the dinghy, and is devoured by sharks before the trophy can be displayed. The old man returns to his hut with cut and bleeding hands, exhausted but happy in the knowledge that he has prevailed. It would be easy for Saddam to see himself in that old man.

Or is he the fish? In the movie it leaps like a fantasy from the water—a splendid, wild, dangerous thing, magnificent in its size and strength. It is hooked, but it refuses to accept its fate. "Never have I had such a strong fish, or one that acted so strangely," the old man proclaims. Later he says, "There is no panic in his fight." Saddam believes that he is a great natural leader, the likes of which his world has not seen in thirteen centuries. Perhaps he will fail in the struggle during his lifetime, but he is convinced that his courage and vision will fire a legend that will burn brightly in a future Arab-centered world.



A reader of Saddam's second novel, *The Fortified Castle*

Even as Saddam rhapsodizes over the rich history of Arabia, he concedes the Western world's clear superiority in two things. The first is weapons technology—hence his tireless efforts to import advanced military hardware and to develop weapons of mass destruction. The second is the art of acquiring and holding power. He has become a student of one of the most tyrannical leaders in history: Joseph Stalin.

Saïd Aburish's biography, *Saddam Hussein: The Politics of Revenge* (2000), tells of a meeting in 1979 between Saddam and the Kurdish politician

Mahmoud Othman. It was an early-morning meeting, and Saddam received Othman in a small office in one of his palaces. It looked to Othman as if Saddam had slept in the office the night before. There was a small cot in the corner, and the President received him wearing a bathrobe.

Next to the bed, Othman recalled, were "over twelve pairs of expensive shoes. And the rest of the office was nothing but a small library of books about one man, Stalin. One could say he went to bed with the Russian dictator."

In the villages of Iraq the patriarch has only one goal: to expand and defend his family's power. It is the only thing of value in the wide, treacherous world. When Saddam assumed full power, there were still Iraqi intellectuals who had hopes for him. They initially accepted his tyranny as inevitable, perhaps even as a necessary bridge to a more inclusive government, and believed, as did many in the West, that his outlook was essentially modern. In this they were gradually disappointed.

In September of 1979 Saddam attended a conference of unaligned nations in Cuba, where he formed a friendship with Fidel Castro, who still keeps him supplied with cigars. Saddam came to the gathering with Salah Omar al-Ali, who was then the Iraqi ambassador to the United Nations, a post he had accepted after a long period of living abroad as an ambassador. Together Saddam and al-Ali had a meeting with the new Foreign Minister of Iran. Four years earlier Saddam had made a surprise concession to the soon-to-be-deposed Shah, reaching an agreement on navigation in the Shatt-al-Arab, a sixty-mile strait formed by the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers as they flow into the Persian Gulf. Both countries had long claimed the strait. In 1979, with the Shah roaming the world in search of cancer treatment, and power in the hands of the Ayatollah Khomeini (whom Saddam had unceremoniously booted out of Iraq the year before), relations between the two countries were again strained, and the waters of the Shatt-al-Arab were a potential flash point. Both countries still claimed ownership of two small islands in the strait, which were then controlled by Iran.

But al-Ali was surprised by the tone of the discussions in Cuba. The Iranian representatives were especially agreeable, and Saddam seemed to be in an excellent mood. After the meeting al-Ali strolled with Saddam in a garden outside the meeting hall. They sat on a bench as Saddam lit a big cigar.

"Well, Salah, I see you are thinking of something," Saddam said. "What are you thinking about?"

"I am thinking about the meeting we just had, Mr. President. I am very happy. I'm very happy that these small problems will be solved. I'm so happy that they took advantage of this chance to meet with you and not one of your ministers, because with you being here we can avoid another problem with them. We are neighbors. We are poor people. We don't need another war. We need to rebuild our countries, not tear them down."

Saddam was silent for a moment, drawing thoughtfully on his cigar. "Salah, how long have you been a diplomat now?" he asked.

"About ten years."

"Do you realize, Salah, how much you have changed?"

"How, Mr. President?"

"How should we solve our problems with Iran? Iran took our lands. They are controlling the Shatt-al-Arab, our big river. How can meetings and discussions solve a problem like this? Do you know why they decided to meet with us here, Salah? They are weak is why they are talking with us. If they were strong there would be no need to talk. So this gives us an opportunity, an opportunity that only comes along once in a century. We have an opportunity here to recapture our territories and regain control of our river."

That was when al-Ali realized that Saddam had just been playing with the Iranians, and that Iraq was going to go to

war. Saddam had no interest in diplomacy. To him, statecraft was just a game whose object was to outmaneuver one's enemies. Someone like al-Ali was there to maintain a pretense, to help size up the situation, to look for openings, and to lull foes into a false sense of security. Within a year the Iran-Iraq war began.

It ended horrifically, eight years later, with hundreds of thousands of Iranians and Iraqis dead. To a visitor in Baghdad the year after the war ended, it seemed that every other man on the street was missing a limb. The country had been devastated. The war had cost Iraq billions. Saddam claimed to have regained control of the Shatt-al-Arab. Despite the huge losses, he was giddy with victory. By 1987 his army, swelled by compulsory service and modern Western armaments, was the fourth largest in the world. He had an arsenal of Scud missiles, a sophisticated nuclear-weapons program under way, and deadly chemical and biological weapons in development. He immediately began planning more conquest.

Saddam's invasion of Kuwait, in August of 1990, was one of the great military miscalculations of modern history. It was a product of grandiosity. Emboldened by his "victory" over Iran, Saddam had begun to plan other improbable undertakings. He announced that he was going to build a world-class subway system for Baghdad, a multi-billion-dollar project, and then proclaimed that he would construct a state-of-the-art nationwide rail system along with it. Ground was never broken for either venture. Saddam didn't have the money. One thing he did have, however, was an army of more than a million idle soldiers—easily enough men to overrun the neighboring state of Kuwait, with its rich oil deposits. He gambled that the world would not care, and he was wrong. Three days after Saddam's takeover of the tiny kingdom President George Bush announced, "This will not stand," and immediately began assembling one of the largest military forces ever in the region.

Through the end of 1990 and into 1991 Ismail Hussain waited in the Kuwaiti desert for the American counterattack. He is a short, stocky man, a singer, musician, and songwriter. The whole time he was forced to wear a uniform, he knew that he did not belong in one. Although some of the men in his unit were good soldiers, none of them thought they belonged in Kuwait. They hoped that they would not have to fight. Everyone knew that the United States had more soldiers, more supplies, and better weapons. Surely Saddam would reach an agreement to save face, and his troops would be able to withdraw peacefully. They waited and waited for this to happen, and when word came that they were actually going to fight, Hussain decided that he was already dead. There was no hope: he foresaw death everywhere. If you went toward the American lines, they would shoot you. If you stayed in the open, they would blow you

up. If you dug a hole and buried yourself, American bunker-buster bombs would stir your remains with the sand. If you ran, your own commanders would kill you—because they would be killed if their men fled. If a man was killed running away, his coffin would be marked with the word “*jaban*,” or “coward.” His memory would be disgraced, his family shunned. There would be no pension for them from the state, no secondary school for his children. “*Jaban*” was a mark that would stain the family for generations. There was no escaping it. Some things are worse than staying with your friends and waiting to die. Hussain’s unit manned an anti-aircraft gun. He never even saw the American fighter jet that took off his leg.

It was apparent to everyone in the Iraqi military, from conscripts like Hussain to Saddam’s top generals, that they could not stand up against such force. Saddam, however, didn’t see it that way. Al-Bazzaz remembers being shocked by this. “We had the most horrible meeting on January 14, 1991, just two days before the allied offensive,” he told me. “Saddam had just met with the UN Secretary General, who had come at the final hour to try to negotiate a peaceful resolution. They had been in a meeting for more than two and a half hours, so hopes were running high that some resolution had been reached. Instead Saddam stepped out to address us, and it was clear he was going to miss this last opportunity. He told us, ‘Don’t be afraid. I see the gates of Jerusalem open before me.’

I thought, *What is this shit?* Baghdad was about to be hit with this terrible firestorm, and he’s talking to us about visions of liberating Palestine?”

Wafic Samarai was in a particularly difficult position. How does one function as chief of intelligence for a tyrant who does not wish to hear the truth? On the one hand, if you tell him the truth and it contradicts his sense of infallibility, you are in trouble. On the other, if you tell him only what he wants to hear, time will inevitably expose your lies and you will be in trouble.

Samarai was a lifelong military officer. He had advised Saddam throughout the long war with Iran, and he had seen him develop a fairly sophisticated understanding of military terminology, weaponry, strategy, and tactics. But Saddam’s vision was clouded by a strong propensity for wishful thinking—the downfall of many an amateur general. If Saddam wanted something to happen, he believed he could will it to happen. Samarai kept up a steady stream of intelligence reports as the United States and its allies assembled an army of nearly a million soldiers in Kuwait, with air power far beyond anything the Iraqis could muster, with artillery, missiles, tanks, and other armored vehicles

decades more advanced than Iraq’s arsenal. The Americans didn’t hide these weapons. They wanted Saddam to understand exactly what he was up against.

Yet Saddam refused to be intimidated. He had a plan, which he outlined to Samarai and his other generals in a meeting in Basra weeks before the American offensive started. He proposed capturing U.S. soldiers and tying them up around Iraqi tanks, using them as human shields. “The Americans will never fire on their own soldiers,” he said triumphantly, as if such squeamishness was a fatal flaw. It was understood that he would have no such compunction. In the fighting, he vowed, thousands of enemy prisoners would be taken for this purpose. Then his troops would roll unopposed into eastern Saudi Arabia, forcing the allies to back down. This was his plan, anyway.

Samarai knew that this was nothing more than a hallucination. How were the Iraqis supposed to capture thousands of American soldiers? No one could approach the American positions, especially in force, without being discovered and killed. Even if it could be done, the very idea of using soldiers as human shields was repulsive, against all laws and international agreements. Who knew how the Ameri-

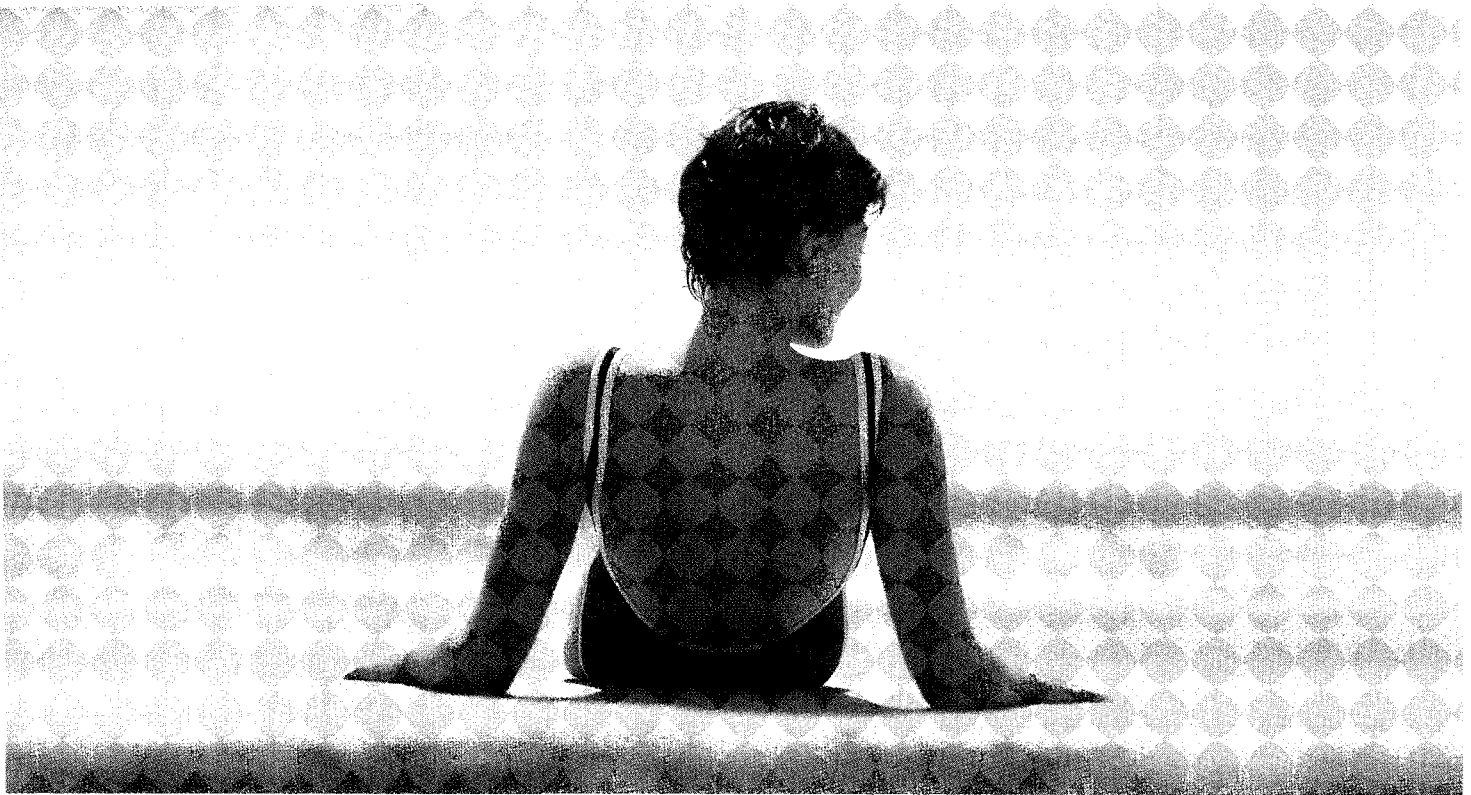
cans would respond to such an act? Might they bomb Baghdad with a nuclear weapon? Saddam’s plan was preposterous. But none of the generals, including Samarai, said a word. They all nodded dutifully and took notes. To question the Great Uncle’s grand strategy

would have meant to admit doubt, timidity, and cowardice. It might also have meant demotion or death.

Still, as chief of intelligence, Samarai felt compelled to tell Saddam the truth. Late in the afternoon of January 14 the general reported for a meeting in Saddam’s office in the Republican Palace. Dressed in a well-cut black suit, the President was behind his desk. Samarai swallowed hard and delivered his grim assessment. It would be very difficult to stand fast against the assault that was coming. No enemy soldiers had been captured, and it was unlikely that any would be. There was no defense against the number and variety of weapons arrayed against Iraq’s troops. Saddam had refused all previous military advice to withdraw the bulk of his forces from Kuwait and move them back across the Iraqi border, where they might be more effective. Now they were so thinly strung out across the desert that there was little to stop the Americans from advancing straight to Baghdad itself. Samarai had detailed evidence to back up his views—photographs, news reports, numbers. The Iraqis could expect nothing more than swift defeat, and the threat that Iran would take advantage of their weakness by invading from the north.

Saddam listened patiently to this litany of pending

The concocted link of bloodlines to Muhammad is symbolized by a hand-lettered copy of the Koran that was written with Saddam’s blood, donated a pint at a time over three years.



Erika's taking a few weeks off before starting her next job.
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disaster. "Are these your personal opinions or are they facts?" he asked. Samarai had presented many facts in his report, but he conceded that some of what he was offering was educated conjecture.

"I will now tell you my opinion," Saddam said calmly, confidently. "Iran will never interfere. Our forces will put up more of a fight than you think. They can dig bunkers and withstand America's aerial attacks. They will fight for a long time, and there will be many casualties on both sides. Only we are willing to accept casualties; the Americans are not. The American people are weak. They would not accept the losses of large numbers of their soldiers."

Samarai was flabbergasted. But he felt he had done his duty. Saddam would not be able to complain later that his chief intelligence officer had misled him. The two men sat in silence for a few moments. Samarai could feel the looming American threat like a great weight pressing on his shoulders. There was nothing to be done. To Samarai's surprise, Saddam did not seem angry with him for delivering this bad news. In fact, he acted appreciative that Samarai had given it to him straight. "I trust you, and that's your opinion," he said. "You are a trustworthy person, an honorable person."

Heavy aerial attacks began three days later. Five weeks after that, on February 24, the ground offensive began, and Saddam's troops promptly surrendered or fled. Thousands were pinned at a place called Mutla Ridge as they tried to cross back into Iraq; most were incinerated in their vehicles. Iran did not invade, but otherwise the war unfolded precisely as Samarai had predicted.

In the days after this rout Samarai was again summoned to meet with Saddam. The President was working out of a secret office. He had been moving from house to house in the Baghdad suburbs, commandeering homes at random in order to avoid sleeping where American smart bombs might hit. Still, Samarai found him looking not just unfazed but oddly buoyed by all the excitement.

"What is your evaluation, general?" Saddam asked.

"I think this is the biggest defeat in military history," Samarai said.

"How can you say that?"

"This is bigger than the defeat at Khorramshahr [one of the worst Iraqi losses in the war with Iran, with Iraqi casualties in the tens of thousands]."

Saddam didn't say anything at first. Samarai knew the President wasn't stupid. He surely had seen what everyone else had seen—his troops surrendering en masse, the slaughter at Mutla Ridge, the grinding devastation of the U.S. bombing campaign. But even if Saddam agreed with the general's assessment, he could not bring himself to say so. In the past, as at Khorramshahr, the generals could always be blamed for defeat. Military people would be accused of sabotage, betrayal, incompetence, or cowardice. There would be arrests and executions, after which Saddam could comfortably harbor the illusion that he had rooted out the

cause of failure. But this time the reasons for defeat rested squarely with him, and this, of course, was something he could never admit. "That's your opinion," he said curtly, and left it at that.

Defeated militarily, Saddam has in the years since responded with even wilder schemes and dreams, articulated in his typically confused, jargon-laden, quasi-messianic rhetoric. "On this basis, and along the same central concepts and their genuine constants, together with the required revolutionary compatibility and continuous renewal in styles, means, concepts, potentials, and methods of treatment and behavior, the proud and loyal people of Iraq and their valiant armed forces will win victory in the final results of the immortal Mother of All Battles," he declared in a televised address to the Iraqi people in August of last year. "With them and through them, good Arabs will win victory. Their victory will be splendid, immortal, immaculate, with brilliance that no interference can overshadow. In our hearts and souls as in the hearts and souls of the high-minded, glorious Iraqi women and high-spirited Iraqi men, victory is absolute conviction, Allah willing. The picking of its final fruit, in accordance with its description which all the world will point to, is a matter of time whose manner and last and final hour will be determined by the Merciful Allah. And Allah is the greatest!"

To help Allah along, Saddam had already started secret programs to develop nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons.

QASWAH (CRUELTY)

The flood has reached its climax and after the destruction, terror, murder, and sacrilege practiced by the aggressive, terrorist, and criminal Zionist entity, together with its tyrannical ally, the U.S., have come to a head against our brothers and our faithful struggling people in plundered Palestine. If evil achieves its objectives there, Allah forbid, its gluttony for more will increase and it will afflict our people and other parts of our wide homeland too.

—Saddam Hussein, in a televised address to the Iraqi people, December 15, 2001

In the early 1980s a mid-level Iraqi bureaucrat who worked in the Housing Ministry in Baghdad saw several of his colleagues accused by Saddam's regime of accepting bribes. The accusations, he believes, were probably true. "There was petty corruption in our department," he says. The accused were all sentenced to die.

"All of us in the office were ordered to attend the hanging," says the former bureaucrat, who now lives in London. "I decided I wasn't going to go, but when my friends found out my plans, they called me and urged me to reconsider, warning that my refusal could turn suspicion on me." So he went. He and the others from his office were led into a prison courtyard, where they watched as their colleagues and friends, with whom they had worked for years, with whose children their

children played, with whom they had attended parties and picnics, were marched out with sacks tied over their heads. They watched and listened as the accused begged, wept, and protested their innocence from beneath the sacks. One by one they were hanged. The bureaucrat decided then and there to leave Iraq.

"I could not live in a country where such a thing takes place," he says. "It is wrong to accept bribes, and those who do it should be punished by being sent to jail. But to hang them? And to order their friends and colleagues to come watch? No one who has witnessed such cruelty would willingly stay and continue to work under such conditions."

Cruelty is the tyrant's art. He studies and embraces it. His rule is based on fear, but fear is not enough to stop everyone. Some men and women have great courage. They are willing to brave death to oppose him. But the tyrant has ways of countering even this. Among those who do not fear death, some fear torture, disgrace, or humiliation. And even those who do not fear these things for themselves may fear them for their fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, wives, and children. The tyrant uses all these tools. He commands not just acts of cruelty but cruel spectacle. So we have Saddam hanging the fourteen alleged Zionist plotters in 1969 in a public square, and leaving their dangling bodies on display. So we have Saddam videotaping the purge in the Baghdad conference hall, and sending the tape to members of his organi-

zation throughout the nation. So we have top party leaders forced to witness and even to participate in the executions of their colleagues. When Saddam cracks down on Shia clerics, he executes not just the mullahs but also their families. Pain and humiliation and death become public theater. Ultimately, guilt or innocence doesn't matter, because there is no law or value beyond the tyrant's will; if he wants someone arrested, tortured, tried, and executed, that is sufficient. The exercise not only serves as warning, punishment, or purge but also advertises to his subjects, his enemies, and his potential rivals that he is strong. Compassion, fairness, concern for due process or the law, are all signs of indecision. Indecision means weakness. Cruelty asserts strength.

Among the Zulu, tyrants are said to be "full of blood." According to one estimate, in the third and fourth years of Saddam's formal rule (1981 and 1982) more than 3,000 Iraqis were executed. Saddam's horrors over the more than thirty years of his informal and formal rule will someday warrant a museum and archives. But lost among the most outrageous atrocities are smaller acts that shed light on his personality. Tahir Yahya was the Prime Minister of Iraq

when the Baath Party took power, in 1968. It is said that in 1964, when Saddam was in prison, Yahya had arranged for a personal meeting and tried to coerce him into turning against the Baathists and cooperating with the regime. Yahya had served Iraq as a military officer his whole adult life, and had at one time even been a prominent member of the Baath Party, one of Saddam's superiors. But he had earned Saddam's enduring scorn. After seizing power, Saddam had Yahya, a well-educated man whose sophistication he resented, confined to prison. On his orders Yahya was assigned to push a wheelbarrow from cell to cell, collecting the prisoners' slop buckets. He would call out "Rubbish! Rubbish!" The former Prime Minister's humiliation was a source of delight to Saddam until the day Yahya died, in prison. He still likes to tell the story, chuckling over the words "Rubbish! Rubbish!"

In another case Lieutenant General Omar al-Hazaa was overheard speaking ill of the Great Uncle in 1990. He was not just sentenced to death. Saddam ordered that prior to his execution his tongue be cut out; for good measure, he also executed al-Hazaa's son, Farouq. Al-Hazaa's homes were bulldozed, and his wife and other children left on the street.

Saddam is realistic about the brutal reprisals that would be unleashed should he ever lose his grip on power. In their book *Out of the Ashes* (1999), Andrew and Patrick Cockburn tell of a family that complained to Saddam that one of their members had been unjustly

What does Saddam want? He isn't a hedonist; he lives a well-regulated existence. The root of Saddam's bloody, single-minded pursuit of power appears to be simple vanity.

executed. He was unapologetic, and told them, "Do not think you will get revenge. If you ever have the chance, by the time you get to us there will not be a sliver of flesh left on our bodies." In other words, if he ever becomes vulnerable, his enemies will quickly devour him.

Even if Saddam is right that greatness is his destiny, his legend will be colored by cruelty. It is something he sees as regrettable, perhaps, but necessary—a trait that defines his stature. A lesser man would lack the stomach for it. His son Uday once boasted to a childhood playmate that he and his brother, Qusay, had been taken to prisons by their father to witness torture and executions—to toughen them up for "the difficult tasks ahead," he said.

Yet no man is without contradictions. Even Saddam has been known to grieve over his excesses. Some who saw him cry at the lectern during the 1979 purge dismiss it as a performance, but Saddam has a history of bursting into tears. In the wave of executions following his formal assumption of power, according to Saïd Aburish's biography, he locked himself in his bedroom for two days and emerged with eyes red and swollen from weeping. Aburish reports that Saddam then paid a brazen though apparently sincere condolence

call on the family of Adnan Hamdani, the executed official who had been closest to him during the previous decade. He expressed not remorse—the execution was *necessary*—but sadness. He told Hamdani's widow apologetically that “national considerations” must outweigh personal ones. So on occasion, at least, Saddam the person laments what Saddam the tyrant must do. During the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln drew a sharp distinction between what he personally would do—abolish slavery—and what his office required him to do: uphold the Constitution and the Union. Saddam ought to feel no such conflict; by definition, the interests of the state are his own. But he does.

The conflict between his personal priorities and his presidential ones has been particularly painful in his own family. Two of his sons-in-law, the brothers Saddam and Hussein Kamel, fled to Jordan and spilled state secrets—about biological, chemical, and nuclear-weapons programs—before inexplicably returning to Iraq and their deaths. Uday Hussein, Saddam's eldest son, is by all reports a sadistic criminal, if not completely mad. He is a tall, dark-skinned, well-built man of thirty-seven, who in his narcissism and willfulness is almost a caricature of his father. Uday has all his father's brutal instincts and, apparently, none of his discipline. He is a flamboyant drunk, and famous for designing his own wild apparel. Photographs show him wearing enormous bow ties and suits in colors to match his luxury cars, including a bright-red one with white stripes, and one that is half red, half white. Some of his suit jackets have a lapel on one side but not the other.

Ismail Hussain, the hapless Iraqi soldier who lost his leg in the Kuwaiti desert, attracted Uday's attention as a singer after the war. He became the First Son's favorite performer, and was invited to sing at the huge parties Uday threw every Monday and Thursday night. The parties were often held at a palace, which Saddam built, on an island in the Tigris near Baghdad. The opulence was eye-popping. All the door handles and fixtures in the palace were made of gold.

“At the parties,” says Ismail, who now lives in Toronto, “I would be performing, and Uday would climb up on the stage with a machine gun and start shooting it at the ceiling. Everyone would drop down, terrified. I was used to being around weapons, bigger weapons than Uday's Kalashnikov, so I would just keep on singing. Sometimes at these parties there would be dozens of women and only five or six men.

Uday insists that everyone get drunk with him. He would interrupt my performance, get up on stage with a big glass of cognac for himself and one for me. He would insist that I drink all of it with him. When he gets really drunk, out come the guns. His friends are all terrified of him, because he can have them imprisoned or killed. I saw him once get angry with one of his friends. He kicked the man in the ass so hard that his boot flew off. The man ran over and retrieved the boot and then tried to put it back on Uday's foot, with Uday cursing him all the while.”

Uday's blessing paves the way for a singer like Ismail to perform regularly on Iraqi television. For this service Uday demands a kickback, and he can unmake a star as quickly as he can make one. The same is true in sports. Raed Ahmed was an Olympic weightlifter who carried the Iraqi flag during the opening ceremonies of the Atlanta games, in

1996. “Uday was head of the Olympic Committee, and all sports in Iraq,” Ahmed told me early this year, in his home in a suburb of Detroit. “During training camp he would closely monitor all the athletes, keeping in touch with the trainers and pushing them to push the athletes harder. If he's unhappy with the results, he will throw the trainers and even the athletes into a prison he keeps inside the Olympic Committee building. If you make a promise of a certain result, and fail to achieve it in competition, then the punishment is a special prison where they torture people. Some of the athletes started



Saddam's eldest son, Uday, in Baghdad

to quit when Uday took over, including many who were the best in their sports. They just decided it was not worth it. Others, like me, loved their sports, and success can be a stepping-stone in Iraq to better things, like a nice car, a nice home, a career. I always managed to avoid being punished. I was careful never to promise anything that I couldn't deliver. I would always say that there was a strong possibility that I would be beaten. Then, when I won, Uday was so happy.”

Ahmed sat like a giant in his small living room, his shoulders nearly as wide as the back of the couch. The world of Saddam and Uday now strikes him as a bizarre wonderland, an entire nation hostage to the whims of a tyrant and his crazy son. “When I defected, Uday was very angry,” he said. “He visited my family and questioned them. ‘Why would Ahmed do such a thing?’ he asked. ‘He was always rewarded by me.’ But Uday is despised.”

Saddam tolerated Uday's excesses—his drunken parties,

his private jail in the Olympic Committee headquarters—until Uday murdered one of the Great Uncle's top aides at a party in 1988. Uday immediately tried to commit suicide with sleeping pills. According to the Cockburns, "As his stomach was being pumped out, Saddam arrived in the emergency room, pushed the doctors aside, and hit Uday in the face, shouting: 'Your blood will flow like my friend's!'" His father softened, and the murder was ruled an accident. Uday spent four months in custody and then four months with an uncle in Geneva before he was picked up by the Swiss police for carrying a concealed weapon and asked to leave the country. Back in Baghdad, in 1996, he became the target of an assassination attempt. He was hit by eight bullets, and is now paralyzed from the waist down. His behavior has presumably disqualified him from succeeding his father. Saddam has made a show in recent years of grooming Qusay, a quieter, more disciplined and dutiful heir.

But the shooting of Uday was a warning to Saddam. Reportedly, a small group of well-educated Iraqi dissidents—none of whom has ever been apprehended, despite thousands of arrests and interrogations—carried it out. The would-be assassins are rumored to be associated with the family of General Omar al-Hazaa, the officer whose tongue was cut out before he and his son were executed. This may be true; but there is no shortage of aggrieved parties in Iraq.

As Saddam approaches his sixty-sixth birthday, his enemies are numerous, strong, and determined. He celebrated the 1992 electoral defeat of George Bush by firing a gun from a palace balcony. Ten years later a new President Bush is in the White House, with a new national mission to remove Saddam. So the walls that protect the tyrant grow higher and higher. His dreams of pan-Arabia and his historical role in it grow ever more fanciful. In his clearer moments Saddam must know that even if he manages to hang on to power for the remainder of his life, the chances of his fathering a dynasty are slim. As he retreats to his secret bed each night, sitting up to watch a favorite movie on TV or to read one of his history books, he must know it will end badly for him. Any man who reads as much as he does, and who studies the dictators of modern history, knows that in the end they are all toppled and disdained.

"His aim is to be leader of Iraq forever, for as long as he lives," Samarai says. "This is a difficult task, even without the United States targeting you. The Iraqis are a divided and ruthless people. It is one of the most difficult nations in the world to govern. To accomplish his own rule, Saddam has shed so much blood. If his aim is for his power to be transferred to his family after his death, I think this is far into the realm of wishful thinking. But I think he lost touch with reality in that sense long ago."

This, ultimately, is why Saddam will fail. His cruelty has created great waves of hatred and fear, and it has also iso-

lated him. He is out of step. His speeches today play like a broken record. They no longer resonate even in the Arab world, where he is despised by secular liberals and Muslim conservatives alike. In Iraq itself he is universally hated. He blames the crippling of the state on UN sanctions and U.S. hostility, but Iraqis understand that he is the cause of it. "Whenever he would start in blaming the Americans for this and that, for everything, we would look at each other and roll our eyes," says Sabah Khalifa Khodada, the former Iraqi major who was stripped and decontaminated for a meeting with the Great Uncle. The forces that protect him know this too—they do not live full time behind the walls. Their loyalty is governed by fear and self-interest, and will tilt decisively if and when an alternative appears. The key to ending Saddam's tyranny is to present such an alternative. It will not be easy. Saddam will never give up. Overthrowing him will almost certainly mean killing him. He guards his hold on the state as he guards his own life. There is no panic in his fight.

But for all the surrounding threats, Saddam sees himself as an immortal figure. Nothing could be more illustrative of this than the plot of his first novel, *Zabibah and the King*. Set in a mythical Arabian past, it is a simple fable about a lonely king, trapped behind the high walls of his palace. He feels cut off from his subjects, so he sets out on occasion to mingle. On one such outing, to a rural village, the king is struck by the beauty of the young Zabibah. She is married to a brutish husband, but the king summons her to his palace, where her rustic ways are at first scorned by the sophisticated courtiers. In time Zabibah's sweet simplicity and virtue charm the court and win the king's heart—although their relationship remains chaste. Questioning his own stern methods, the king is reassured by Zabibah, who tells him, "The people need strict measures so that they can feel protected by this strictness." But dark forces invade the kingdom. Infidel outsiders pillage and destroy the village, aided by Zabibah's jealous and humiliated husband, who rapes her. (The outrage occurs on January 17, the day in 1991 when the United States and allied powers began aerial attacks on Iraq.) Zabibah is later killed; the king defeats his enemy and slays Zabibah's husband. He then experiments with giving his people more freedoms, but they fall to fighting among themselves. Their squabbles are interrupted by the good king's death and their realization of his greatness and importance. The martyred Zabibah's sage advice reminds them: the people need strict measures.

And so Saddam champions the simple virtues of a glorious Arab past, and dreams that his kingdom, though universally scorned and defiled, will rise again and triumph. Like the good king, he is vital in a way that will not be fully understood until he is gone. Only then will we all study the words and deeds of this magnificent, defiant soul. He awaits his moment of triumph in a distant, glorious future that mirrors a distant, glorious past. ■

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LAWYERS AND LIZARD-HEADS

The prison letters of James Earl Ray

BY DOUGLAS BRINKLEY AND ANNE BRINKLEY

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The special-collections department of Boston University's Mugar Memorial Library holds more than 83,000 documents pertaining to the life of the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., who received a doctorate in theology from the university in 1955 and established the King archive with a large donation of materials in 1964. Eighteen months ago Howard Godlieb, the university's director of special collections, quietly augmented the library's holdings with the prison letters of James Earl Ray, the man widely believed to be King's assassin. Earlier this year we were the first people outside the library to be given an opportunity to examine the Ray letters.

The collection consists of approximately 400 letters that James Earl Ray wrote from 1969 to 1997—mostly to his brother Jerry. Prison regulations forbade him to write letters longer than two pages, so Ray was always succinct. The early letters are handwritten, sometimes with a green ball-point pen; as the years went on, Ray became adept at typing. From his cell at Brushy Mountain State Penitentiary, an hour from Knoxville, and at Tennessee State Prison and the Riverbend Maximum Security Institution, in Nashville, Ray detailed his battles with wardens, police officers, and legal authorities; his views on celebrity and the news media; and his endless maneuverings to promote some self-exculpatory version of the circumstances behind the King assassination.

The Ray collection offers an intimate glimpse into the life of a criminal whose adult years were spent almost entirely behind bars. James Earl Ray was born in 1928 in Alton, Illinois, the first of seven children. His father was an ex-convict; his own career outside the law began at an early age. In 1967, imprisoned for robbing a grocery store, Ray escaped from the Missouri State Penitentiary, in Jefferson City, by hiding in a bread crate. He lived free for a year under numerous aliases in the United States and Canada. On April 4, 1968, Martin Luther King was shot and killed as he stood on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel, in Memphis. Prosecutors contended that Ray fired the fatal shot from the bathroom of a rooming house. He was apprehended at London's Heathrow Airport two months after the assassination.

During the thirty years of his imprisonment Ray often

sought to persuade the world that he was a fall guy framed by the FBI or by organized crime. Initially Ray had confessed to killing King; he agreed to a plea bargain and was given a prison sentence of ninety-nine years. Soon after his sentencing, however, he recanted his confession. Much of Ray's correspondence deals with his subsequent efforts to overturn the plea bargain and have his case brought to trial, which the State of Tennessee opposed. The convoluted legal battle continued until Ray's death, in 1998, and ultimately made Ray deeply conversant with the technicalities of the law.

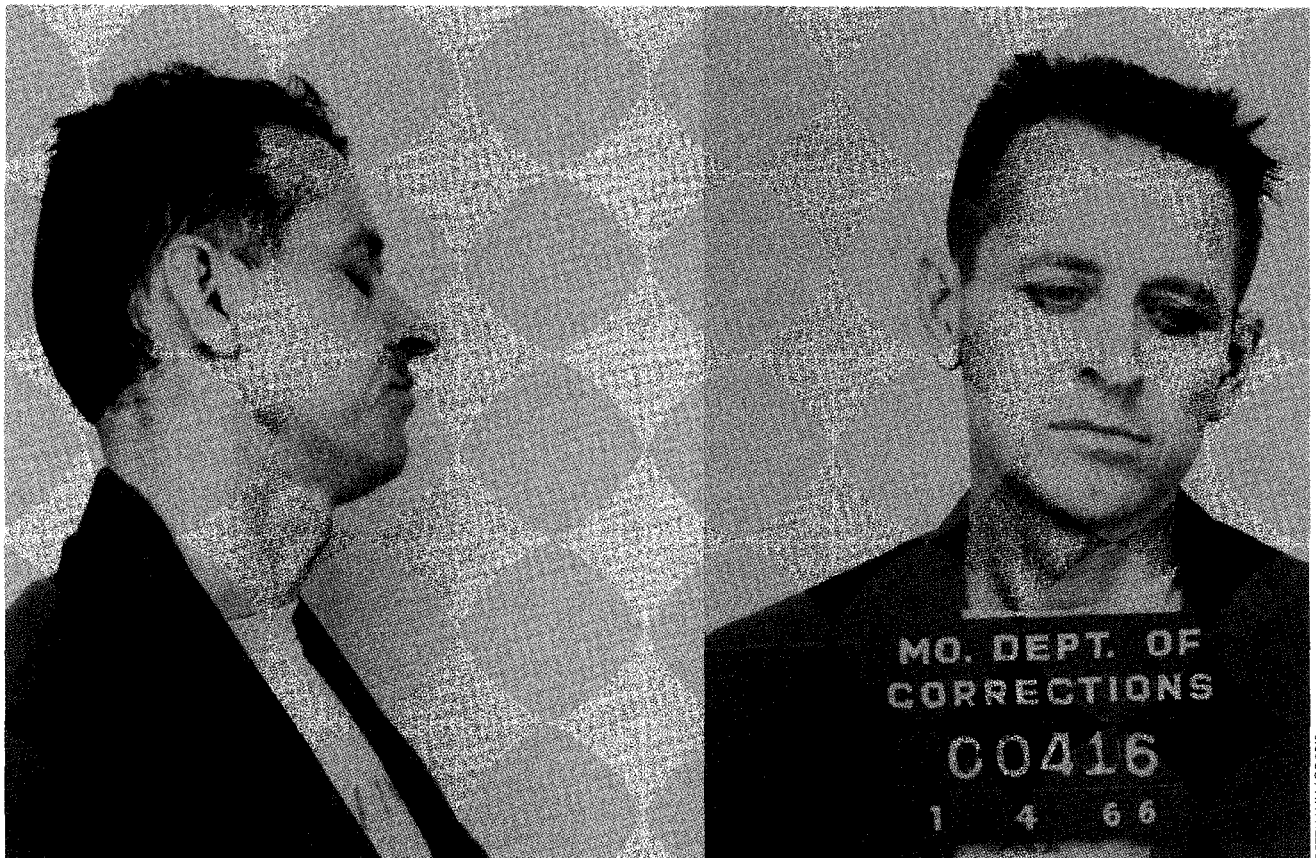
In the following 1972 letter from Ray to Jerry, "Fensterwald" is Bernard Fensterwald, Ray's lawyer at the time, and "J.B." is J. B. Stoner, a Georgia segregationist and lawyer, who would one day be charged with the 1958 bombing of Birmingham's Bethel Street Baptist Church. The letter typifies the way Ray was always playing angles, legal and investigative. "Franks" is most likely Gerold Frank, the author of a 1972 book about the King assassination, *An American Death*.

That is to bad about the Judge getting sick but maybe he will get allright before to long. The business I wanted you and J.B. to see him about is more important than 1000 talk shows, I can't get any legal relief from talk shows, althoe they might help some ... We should have had the info the Judge was looking into 2 or 3 years ago. Therefore if you and J.B. goes through Chattannoga stop and see him if he is well enough, if he can't do nothing personally he might tell you who to see or, he may have allready found out something. If he can't J.B. suggested something when he was up here, but since I don't want to put it in this letter, I will wait until I see him or you. (The warden told Fensterwald that he may put you back on visiting list)

Fensterwald was here Friday the 21st. and he thinks we have an excellent chance for suing Franks and others including the Att.Gen. but again we will need the info. I have been telling you about above.

Fensterwald seem's to think everything is going good. The state has about run out of time, of stalling time ...

Concluding, I believe every thing legally is about to come to a head, the suit is now in the Tenn.Sup.Ct. and they will have to rule in a couple of months, plus the civil suit will probably force the state to do something.



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Not surprisingly, in none of the letters did Ray confess to the murder of Martin Luther King. In none of them did he profess his innocence, either; the outrage of the Wronged Man is missing. Ray's attention was narrowly focused on the legal process, and on getting a trial.

When a committee of the U.S. House of Representatives investigated the King assassination, in 1978, it concluded that Ray had indeed killed King but may have had help. Ray himself eventually claimed that the assassination was orchestrated by a mysterious man named Raoul. A succession of lawyers for Ray—nine in all—struggled over the years to build some sort of case in his behalf. It was not easy: he was an inveterate liar. When he died, of liver failure, at the age of seventy, it seemed that the matter was at an end. But a victory of sorts for Ray occurred within two years of his death, when a Memphis jury came to the conclusion that a government conspiracy was responsible for King's assassination. The jury's decision came in a suit filed by the King family against Loyd Jowers, a retired Memphis entrepreneur who stated on national television in 1993 that he had paid someone other than Ray to murder King. Jowers maintained that he had become involved at the behest of an acquaintance who was employed by the Mafia boss Carlos Marcello, of New Orleans. The jury held Jowers liable in King's death and concluded that unnamed others, including officials of U.S. government agencies, were also implicated in the crime. The King family was awarded \$100—the symbolic fee requested in the suit. "In

my opinion it had to be a conspiracy," Martin Luther King III has maintained. "It's probably a fact that the intelligence community played a role." Despite such statements, the notion of Ray as an innocent party has not widely taken hold in America. The most respected book on the assassination, Gerald Posner's *Killing the Dream* (1998), unflinchingly points to Ray as the assassin.

James Earl Ray and his brothers, Jerry and Jack, epitomized the outlook of a certain kind of hardscrabble white world: a world of blinking ignorance, pathetic bigotry, and cramped horizons. Ray detested the influx of nonwhite foreigners into America. "I suspect if you go to Chicago or any place else right now it will be difficult to find a job," he wrote to Jerry in 1982. "There are so many illegal aliens it is hard to find work." Ray was, of course, a racist, though he tried to depict himself otherwise. As Gerald Posner wrote, Ray had picked fights with black sailors while in Mexico, tried to flee to segregationist Rhodesia after killing King, and refused to be transferred to an integrated honor farm while serving his sentence for robbery. Among his papers is a newspaper clipping that chronicles the rise of the racist politician David Duke in Louisiana. J. B. Stoner, the lawyer for the National States Rights Party, figures prominently in Ray's letters; Stoner's letters to Ray conclude "With Best White Racist Wishes." Stoner was among the

Above: James Earl Ray in mug shots from 1966

first people to defend Ray after King's assassination. Jerry Ray served as Stoner's campaign manager when Stoner ran for governor of Georgia against Jimmy Carter, in 1970, and for many years was his bodyguard and driver. When Stoner was charged with the Birmingham bombing and implicated in others, James Earl Ray lamented in one letter that his friend would come to be known in the press as the "butcher of Birmingham." In a 1982 letter to Jerry he offered some legal advice to pass along to J.B. (His command of the legal process, and of English spelling, had improved considerably during more than a decade in prison.)

In respect to JB's case, I have read numerous cases where the court have dismissed habeas corpus petitions because the petitioner waited too long to file them. The court have held that witnesses have disappeared or died and it was the petitioner responsible to file habeas corpus as soon as he learned of the grounds he could file under. It seems to me the same would apply when prosecuting. JB could have had witnesses 20 years ago that showed he was not at the scene of the bombing and they could have expired or moved somewhere. If I was him I would be checking into confinement in case his bond is revoked if the sup. ct. denied to hear the appeal. The medical issue is a good one. Sometimes you can get into a medical facility (where usually both nuts & the ill are kept like Springfield), and it is a lot better. Enclosed is a clipping wherein a pervert had his time cut because the judge said prison life would be to stressful—maybe JB could say he was gay and have his sentence suspended?

Ray was conscious of how much law he had picked up. One letter to Stoner ends like this: "When I get out could you use a research assistant? You do the talking and I the rest?"

In his letters from prison James Earl Ray never once wrote a critical word about Martin Luther King (whom he usually referred to simply as "MLK"). He knew that he had no hope of a reversal of fortune if anything disparaging of King or of any other African-American leader escaped from his pen or his lips. He succeeded beyond his expectations in his campaign to persuade civil-rights leaders to embrace his cause. He intuitively understood that he and they had one big thing in common: a visceral distrust of the FBI (which had conducted a systematic campaign of surveillance against King) and an unwillingness to believe its version of anything.

Ray's support in the civil-rights community is astonishing. The Reverend Jesse Jackson wrote an introduction to one of Ray's two autobiographies, *Who Killed Martin Luther King?* (1992). Dick Gregory co-wrote an investigative book, *Zorro* (1977), which defended Ray and argued that King had been killed by the FBI. The Reverend Hosea Williams, one of King's closest associates, held a series of news conferences, insisting that Ray had been framed. The usually circumspect Andrew Young, after looking into the case, called it a travesty of justice. The great Gandhian teacher of King, the Reverend James Lawson (the hero of David

Halberstam's 1998 book, *The Children*, a group biography of the leading activists of the Nashville lunch-counter sit-in movement), officiated at Ray's marriage in prison (to a courtroom artist named Anna Sandhu, who later divorced him). In March of 1997 King's son Dexter visited Ray in prison. "I want to ask for the record: Did you kill my father?" the young King asked. "No, I didn't, no, no," Ray replied. To which Dexter responded, "I believe you, and my family believes you, and we will do everything in our power to see you prevail."

There is a letter in the Ray papers from Coretta Scott King to Jerry Ray, on the occasion of James Earl's death, in which she expressed how "deeply saddened" she was by the news. "This tragedy is made even more painful by the fact that your brother was denied his day in court and an opportunity to prove his innocence," she wrote. "We want to assure you, however, that the King family will do everything in our power to press for a full investigation of all new and unexamined evidence which could verify his innocence."

Paranoia suffuses Ray's letters. Ray tried to outfox the authorities by using code names and pseudonyms—"John the Baptist," "Holyman"—to camouflage identities. He addressed many of his letters to his brother under the alias Jerry W. Ryan. He warned Jerry to beware of undercover cops, who might disguise themselves as Radio Shack repairmen. "The FBI probably has a cover on your mail," he wrote. In another letter, from 1992, he brought up the subject of wiretapping. "Pepper" is William Pepper, Ray's last lawyer; "Jack" is Ray's other brother, always in trouble if not in jail.

Speaking of tapped phones, yours is most likely tapped due to Jack's fugitive status and others things. So what ever you have said to Pepper on the phone, or anyone else that you have phoned or who have phoned you the FBI knows what has been said. I assume you tell Pepper and other callers that your phone is tapped. There is also the possibility that persons who call you phone is tapped. Anyway I would call from a pay phone and even then not say too much. I suspect Pepper is being bugged to find out what he is up too in the law suits & documentary.

Ray's suspiciousness extended to women. He gave Jerry some advice: "You can't trust everyone to far, especially the women type, never let the left hand know what the right is doing." Ray's sense of being beleaguered influenced his views on national politics. He sided with Richard Nixon and Spiro Agnew during their legal and political woes. "Don't criticize Dick & Spiro," he told Jerry. "The public now know that not only the press lies ... but the FBI." He felt that reporters were sometimes out to get him, just as they were out to get Nixon. Once, after an interview in which a photographer took pictures as Ray spoke, Ray expressed regret that he had allowed the photographer to do so.

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Anyone should not do this since they sometimes try to get a nut-picture if they are figuring on writing some nonsense. They used to get Nixon's picture with his eyes closed and his mouth gaped open. Anyway from now on I'll let them take the pics. then, the interview.

Ray's correspondence lacks artistry, to put it mildly. This is not Jean Genet's *The Thief's Journal* or even Jack Henry Abbott's *In the Belly of the Beast*. Yet Ray at times displayed a feral cunning, and his slang-laden prose offers some of the demented punch of a 1930s crime drama. Money is always "loot," security guards are "pillheads," lawyers are "winos," reporters are "lizard-heads," critics are "stool-pigeons," and prisons are "lock-ups." Sending Jerry, who was living in Georgia, a Christmas letter in 1971, Ray urged his brother to "go light on the moonshine." The details of prison life provide a rich backdrop. On one occasion Ray needed a mirror, no doubt to help him see up and down the corridor from inside his cell. He gave Jerry instructions.

The next time you are at k-mart pick up a dome-mirror and send it to Anna. They are sometimes used on outside rear view mirror and come in different sizes. Get one for her about the size of a half dollar, or the smallest they have. If you can't find one small don't get any.

Another time he explained to Jerry how to sneak in some basic necessities: "Get a large box of all-bran and open the top and put in the watch you have plus the typewriter ribbon & two batteries for the pen-watch ... If you sent the watch in a small package it would be easy to steal in the mail room plus I like the all-bran."

By and large there is a knowing, tough-guy affectation in Ray's writing—as if he was angling for immortality as a cinematic hillbilly gangster. From the outset he was plainly anxious about his place in history. After the King assassination Ray headed for Canada, once risking arrest by visiting a tavern in Toronto in order to watch the popular television series *The F.B.I.*; he wanted to see if he had made it onto the most-wanted list. Reading Ray's letters calls to mind such ego-deformed drifters as Don DeLillo's Lee Harvey Oswald, in *Libra*, and Norman Mailer's Gary Gilmore, in *The Executioner's Song*. Ray monitored the reputations of infamous contemporaries like Oswald and Jack Ruby—he felt them to be kindred spirits, members of a fraternity of patriotic outsiders who loved America but despised the government. He paid attention to the circumstances of other notorious criminals. "If you should have a pinched nerve can't you get social security disability?" Ray asked Jerry in 1984, adding, "Son-of-Sam was getting it in prison until Reagan cut prisoners off."

He did have a bond with his brothers, and constantly offered them advice from his prison cell. To Jerry in 1986 he wrote, "Probably all thoes habits you have keeps your immune system weak. I'd give up on either the cigs or beer and start running 8 or 10 miles before breakfast every

morning, plus join a back-to-nature club." It was the Ray family versus the world. By comparison with Jerry and Jack, Ray was a mastermind. A 1984 letter to Ray offers a glimpse of Jerry and his world view.

I worked nine Straight Nights, twice i put in 13 hours, twice 11 1/2 and the other five night 9 1/2 hours.

I made Two Hundred and Ninty seven dollars for five nights, but after Rabbi Reagan got through taxing me in order to send to Isreal then i took home Two Hundred and Twenty Four Dollars.

Ray urged his brother to try to find some steady kind of work. One suggestion was decidedly odd, given the family's continual run-ins with the law.

If I were you I would try to pick up on a trade, rather than scrubbing floors for ever. That lock smith course is a good one, and easy to learn. They make their money by selling keys & locks. A lock smith get a card from the school he get his diploma from authorizing him to buy blank keys that he uses to make keys to sell—you can't buy a blank unless you have the diploma card. Anyway they buy a blank for a quarter & sell it after grinding it down for 2 or 3 dollars.

Brother Jack was a harder case: "What Jack should do when he gets out is get a tavern, or both of you. However, if he can stay in jail easier than he can get along with customers than he might as well stay where he's at. I should have some loot by the time he get's out."

James Earl Ray nurtured deeply ambivalent feelings about celebrity in America. He needed to exploit his infamy in order to gain a platform for his legal battles. But media exposure was not something whose tone or direction he could dictate. Whenever Ray was hauled into public, lights and cameras lay in wait. "The only other thing I mite need is a pair of clip on sunglasses," he wrote to Jerry a year after his arrest. "They get those cameras in my face when I come and leave here and you can't even see, If they won't except them at the prison let me know. You can get a pair for 50¢ they slip on over your glasses."

Every reporter in the world, it seemed, wanted an interview with James Earl Ray. Playing cat and mouse with the media became a pastime. Ray liked seeing his name in print but was thin-skinned when reporters wrote "nut-stories" about him. He declared war against *Playboy* for not buying his convoluted story about the mysterious Raoul, and he wrote "Dear Scumbag" letters to offending journalists. He saw Geraldo Rivera and Tom Brokaw as "government pimps." Of F. Lee Bailey, whom he had tried to retain as his attorney shortly after being arrested, Ray wrote to Jerry in 1983,

I also have a clipping dated 3/29/79 where Bailey told a Memphis audience that I was guilty and did not deserve a trial. This guy is no good and sold out the Boston Strangler and then cooperated with Gerold Frank in Frank's book about the case. He gets out of too many jams not to be a gov. pimp.

In 1986, when *Life* wanted to publish a story about him, Ray threatened to “punch the photographer in the nose” and then “kick him in the ass”; he had resented an earlier *Life* article, which misrepresented him (on its cover) as the scowling schoolboy face in an old class photograph. His autobiographies bragged about his various prison escapes and other acts of derring-do. He had stationery printed; the letterhead read “James E. Ray: Author.” Convinced that mainstream U.S. journalists were controlled by the FBI, he cultivated media contacts in Argentina, Iran, Poland, Luxembourg, and elsewhere. The following instruction to Jerry is typical:

Phone the West German Embassy in Washington DC and ask for the address of the NATIONAL ZEITUNG newspaper located in MUNCHEN. Also ask for the address of minor political parties with an address in MUNCHEN.

Ray exploited the fact that foreign journalists with an anti-American sensibility had no trouble accepting his story that the White House and the FBI had ordered King’s assassination.

Ray read everything about himself he could get his hands on. He kept a nine-inch Philco television set in his prison cell and had Jerry send him a shortwave radio so that he could listen to an all-night white-power radio station. He became his own booking agent, juggling television appearances with skill, and keeping track of the schedules of various journalists. In a 1989 letter he wrote, “I’m not going to see 20/20 until late summer. The producer said there was no hurry & that Barbara Walters was going on vacation from July until late August.” He developed working relationships with HBO and the *Morton Downey Jr. Show*. “I got a letter from a TV magazine called ‘Hard Copy’ about an interview,” he wrote Jerry in 1991. “I’m going to let the publisher handle the interviews since I doubt if he would want to give one to 20/20 & another station at the same time.” When television programs did not turn out the way he wanted, he was quick to say so. The anniversary of King’s assassination generally prompted retrospective news programs every April. Ray was likely responding to one such program when he wrote, in April of 1991,

In re to the interview of me by NBC-cable, I understand the interview was aired over CNN too, wherein the old Bat Barbara Neven who conducted the interview touted the gov. version of the MLK case. Since most of the MLK homicide records are classified one might ask how she knows so much about the case. In addition to being a zealot what with her ranting here about Iran, Iraq & gun control she apparently had some sort of personal conflict with my brother Jerry Ray while she worked for an Atlanta TV station ... so she is not exactly an impartial operator ...

Concluding, I made a mistake in granting the interview & should have stayed with the foreign media. And while I understand that you are just a mouth-piece for the Scumbag behind the scene, you might tell him not to bother having any more of his pimps, or whores for that matter, phoning down here or asking for interviews.

Ray was mindful of his physical image. He asked Jerry to smuggle “a can of pump hair tonic” into Brushy Mountain, where most aerosol cans were banned, so that he could groom himself for upcoming TV appearances. In 1985 he sent his brother a recent photograph taken of him in prison by a journalist: “The photographer took it of me on the yard when I wasn’t looking. They are suppose to get the prisoner’s consent but the photographer a crazy acting girl snuck behind the guards to get it. If I had of knew I would have been punching a bag on the yard acting like I was getting in shape.”

Parlaying infamy into profit was never far from Ray’s mind; he needed money to pay his various lawyers. One scheme was to sell his paintings. “The government gave some guy out in town a grant to sell convicts pictures,” Ray wrote to Jerry in 1986. “I’ll get about 75\$ a piece for two and will send them out early next month.” His price soon climbed to \$400 apiece. Ray bought boxes of his own books at bulk rate, signed them, and then sold them at jacked-up prices through advertisements in the tabloids. When Jerry suggested that he also take out ads in a Washington, D.C., newspaper, to sell audiotapes he was making about his case, Ray pointed out the realities: “About the ad, the wash. paper has a circulation of about 350,000 while the Enquirer has about 7,000,000 so you don’t have to be a mathematician to see more people would read it in the Enquirer.”

Ray began keeping track of the value of his signature to determine his ranking in the celebrity hierarchy. He sent Jerry a page from *The Price Guide to Autographs* that showed his signature to be worth \$25 whereas Oral Roberts’s went for \$10, Diane Sawyer’s for \$5.00, and Pierre Salinger’s for \$3.00. His signed photograph fetched \$35 more than a photograph signed by Eleanor Roosevelt.

Ray expressed hope that Oliver Stone, whose movie *JFK* he admired, would make a movie based on his case. “They are trying to have an agent speak with Stone,” he wrote to Jerry. “When contacting a producer an agent is required.” When Ray was still alive, Stone was at one point in negotiation with William Pepper, Ray’s lawyer.

What is startling about the Ray letters is their largely unemotional tone. The central event in Ray’s life, the death of Martin Luther King, comes up only in shorthand references, as if Ray had to mention it only because it was germane to his attempts to get a trial. There is no acknowledgment of King as a person, no acknowledgment of the significance of the assassination, no expression of empathy for any person outside Ray’s tiny personal circle. Ray’s sensibility was narcissistic. He existed in prison, physically apart, but in a late-twentieth-century America that allowed him to sustain a web of activities in the outside world. Ray hired lawyers, filed lawsuits, wrote books, managed money, arranged interviews, ordered supplies. It was a swirling enterprise, directed by and toward himself, and played like an elaborate game. And in a now familiar dynamic, often the outside world played along. ▀

THE ROYAL WE

The mathematical study of genealogy indicates that everyone in the world is descended from Nefertiti and Confucius, and everyone of European ancestry is descended from Muhammad and Charlemagne

BY STEVE OLSON

Illustration by Melissa Grimes

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A few years ago the Genealogical Office in Dublin moved from a back room of the Heraldic Museum up the street to the National Library. The old office wasn't big enough for all the people stopping by to track down their Irish ancestors, and even the new, much larger office is often crowded. Because of its history of oppression and Catholic fecundity, Ireland has been a remarkably productive exporter of people. The population of the island has never exceeded 10 million, but more than 70 million people worldwide claim Irish ancestry. On warm summer days, as tourists throng nearby Trinity College and Dublin Castle, the line of visitors waiting to consult one of the office's professional genealogists can stretch out the door.

I suspect that many people have had a fling with genealogy somewhat like mine. In my office I have a file containing the scattered lines of Olsons and Taylors, Richmans and Sigginses (my Irish ancestors), that I gathered several years ago in a paroxysm of family-mindedness. For the most part my ancestors were a steady stream of farmers, ministers, and malcontents. Yet a few of the Old World lines hint at something grander—they include a couple of knights, and even a baron. I've never taken the trouble to find out, but I bet with a little work I could achieve that nirvana of genealogical research, demonstrated descent from a royal family.

Earlier this year I went to Dublin to learn more about the Irish side of my family and to talk about genealogy with Mark Humphrys, a young computer scientist at Dublin City University. Humphrys has dark hair, deep-blue eyes, heavily freckled arms, and a pasty complexion. He became interested in genealogy as a teenager, after hearing romantic stories about his ancestors' roles in rebellions against the English. But when he tried to trace his family further into the past, the trail ran cold. The Penal Laws imposed by England in the early eighteenth century forbade Irish Catholics from buying land or joining professions, which meant that very few permanent records of their existence were generated. "Irish people of Catholic descent are almost completely cut off from

the past," Humphrys told me, as we sat in his office overlooking a busy construction site. (Dublin City University, which specializes in information technology and the life sciences, is growing as rapidly as the northern Dublin suburb in which it is located.) "The great irony about Ireland is that even though we have this long, rich history, almost no person of Irish-Catholic descent can directly connect to that history."

While a graduate student at Cambridge University, Humphrys fell in love with and married an Englishwoman, and investigating her genealogy proved more fruitful. Her family knew that they were descended from an illegitimate son of the tenth Earl of Pembroke. After just a couple of hours in the Cambridge library, Humphrys showed that the Earl of Pembroke was a direct descendant of Edward III, making Humphrys's wife the King's great-granddaughter twenty generations removed. Humphrys began to gather other genealogical tidbits related to English royalty. Many of the famous Irish rebels he'd learned about in school turned out to have ancestors who had married into prominent Protestant families, which meant they were descended from English royalty. The majority of American presidents were also of royal descent, as were many of the well-known families of Europe.

Humphrys began to notice something odd. Whenever a reliable family tree was available, almost anyone of European ancestry turned out to be descended from English royalty—even such unlikely people as Hermann Göring and Daniel Boone. Humphrys began to think that such descent was the rule rather than the exception in the Western world, even if relatively few people had the documents to demonstrate it.

Humphrys compiled his family genealogies first on paper and then using computers. He did much of his work on royal genealogies in the mid-1990s, when the World Wide Web was just coming into general use. He began to put his findings on Web pages, with hyperlinks connecting various lines of descent. Suddenly dense networks of ancestry jumped out at him. "I'd known these descents were interconnected,



but I'd never known how much," he told me. "You can't see the connections reading the printed genealogies, because it's so hard to jump from tree to tree. The problem is that genealogies aren't two-dimensional, so any attempt to put them on paper is more or less doomed from the start. They aren't three-dimensional, either, or you could make a structure. They have hundreds of dimensions."

Much of Humphrys's genealogical research now appears on his Web page *Royal Descents of Famous People*. Sitting in his office, I asked him to show me how it works. He clicked on the name Walt Disney. Up popped a genealogy done by Brigitte Gastel Lloyd (Humphrys links to the work of others whenever possible) showing the twenty-two generations separating Disney from Edward I. Humphrys pointed at the screen. "Here we have a sir, so this woman is the daughter of a knight. Maybe this woman will marry nobility, but there's a limited pool of nobility, so eventually someone here is going to marry someone who's just wealthy. Then one of their children could marry someone who doesn't have that much money. In ten generations you can easily get from princess to peasant."

The idea that virtually anyone with a European ancestor descends from English royalty seems bizarre, but it accords perfectly with some recent research done by Joseph Chang, a statistician at Yale University. The mathematics of our ancestry is exceedingly complex, because the number of our ancestors increases exponentially, not linearly. These numbers are manageable in the first few generations—two parents, four grandparents, eight great-grandparents, sixteen great-great-grandparents—but they quickly spiral out of control. Go back forty generations, or about a thousand years, and each of us theoretically has more than a trillion direct ancestors—a figure that far exceeds the total number of human beings who have ever lived.

In a 1999 paper titled "Recent Common Ancestors of All Present-Day Individuals," Chang showed how to reconcile the potentially huge number of our ancestors with the quantities of people who actually lived in the past. His model is a mathematical proof that relies on such abstractions as Poisson distributions and Markov chains, but it can readily be applied to the real world. Under the conditions laid out in his paper, the most recent common ancestor of

every European today (except for recent immigrants to the Continent) was someone who lived in Europe in the surprisingly recent past—only about 600 years ago. In other words, all Europeans alive today have among their ancestors the same man or woman who lived around 1400. Before that date, according to Chang's model, the number of ancestors common to all Europeans today increased, until, about a thousand years ago, a peculiar situation prevailed: 20 percent of the adult Europeans alive in 1000 would turn out to be the ancestors of no one living today (that is, they had no children or all their descendants eventually died childless); each of the remaining 80 percent would turn out to be a direct ancestor of every European living today.

Chang's model incorporates one crucial assumption: random mating in the part of the world under consideration. For example, every person in Europe would have to have an equal chance of marrying every other European of the opposite sex. As Chang acknowledges in his paper, random mating clearly does not occur in reality; an Englishman is much likelier to marry a woman from England than a woman from Italy, and a princess is much likelier to marry a prince than a pauper. These departures from randomness must push back somewhat the date of Europeans' most recent common ancestor.

But Humphrys's Web page suggests that over many generations mating patterns may be much more random

than expected. Social mobility accounts for part of the mixing—what Voltaire called the slippered feet going down the stairs as the hobnailed boots ascend them. At the same time, revolutions overturn established orders, countries invade and colonize other countries, and people sometimes choose mates from far away rather than from next door. Even the world's most isolated peoples—Pacific islanders, for example—continually exchange potential mates with neighboring groups.

This constant churning of people makes it possible to apply Chang's analysis to the world as a whole. For example, almost everyone in the New World must be descended from English royalty—even people of predominantly African or Native American ancestry, because of the long history of intermarriage in the Americas. Similarly, everyone of European ancestry must descend from Muhammad. The line of descent for which records exist is through the daughter of the Emir of Seville, who is reported to have converted from Islam to Catholicism in about 1200. But many other, unrecorded descents must also exist.

Chang's model has even more dramatic implications. Because people are always migrating from continent to continent, networks of descent quickly interconnect. This means that the most recent common ancestor of all six billion people on earth today probably lived just a couple of thousand years ago. And not long before that the majority of the people on the planet were the direct ancestors of everyone alive today. Confucius, Nefertiti, and just about any other ancient historical figure who was even moderately prolific must today be counted among everyone's ancestors.

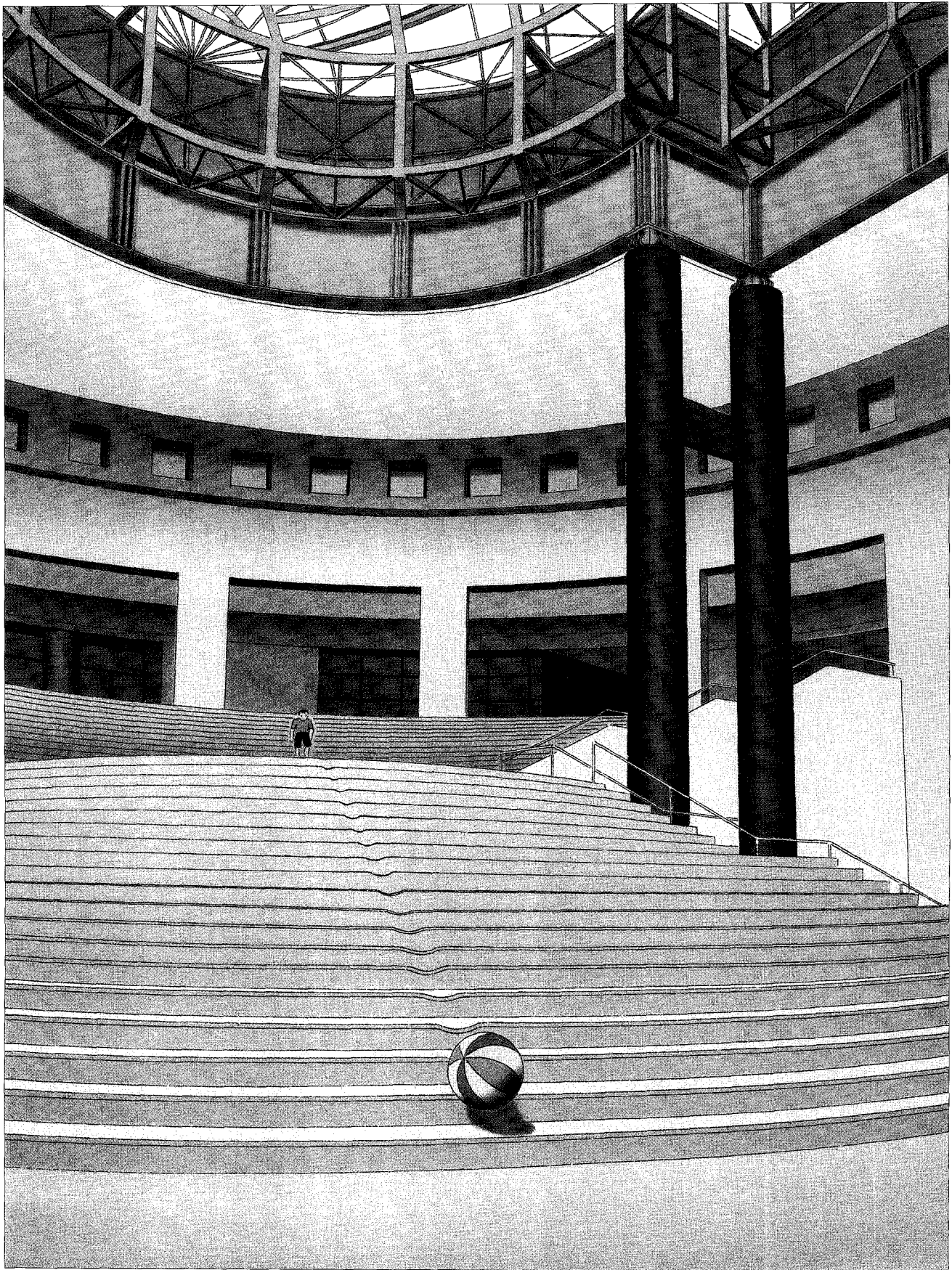
Toward the end of our conversation Humphrys pointed out something I hadn't considered. The same process works going forward in time; in essence every one of us who has children and whose line does not go extinct is suspended at the center of an immense genetic hourglass. Just as we are descended from most of the people alive on the planet a few thousand years ago, several thousand years hence each of us will be an ancestor of the entire human race—or of no one at all.

The dense interconnectedness of the human family might seem to take some of the thrill out of genealogical research. Sure, I was able to show in the Genealogical Office that my Siggins ancestors are descended from the fourteenth-century Syggens of County Wexford; but I'm also descended from most of the other people who lived in Ireland in the fourteenth century. Humphrys took issue with my disillusionment. It's true that everyone's roots go back to the same family tree, he said. But each path to our common past is different, and reconstructing that path, using whatever records are available, is its own reward. "You can ask whether everyone in the Western world is descended from Charlemagne, and the answer is yes, we're all descended from Charlemagne. But can you prove it? That's the game of genealogy." ■

WHO THE MEEK ARE NOT

Not the bristle-bearded Igors bent
under burlap sacks, not peasants knee-deep
in the rice-paddy muck,
nor the serfs whose quarter-moon sickles
make the wheat fall in waves
they don't get to eat. My friend the Franciscan
nun says we misread
that word *meek* in the Bible verse that blesses them.
To understand the meek
(she says) picture a great stallion at full gallop
in a meadow, who—
at his master's voice—seizes up to a stunned
but instant halt.
So with the strain of holding that great power
in check, the muscles
along the arched neck keep eddying,
and only the velvet ears
prick forward, awaiting the next order.

—MARY KARR



THE CHILDHOOD OF HERCULES *by Guy Billout*

**THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY MAGAZINE ANNOUNCES THE FOLLOWING
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GITA HENSEN

Bennington Writing Seminars

2ND PRIZE

ANN STEWART HARRIS

University of Arizona

3RD PRIZE

ANTHONY VANDERKAM

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Columbia University

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BRET ANTHONY JOHNSTON

University of Iowa

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University of Michigan

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Colorado State University

POETRY

ALBORN

Yale University

ELAT

Yale University

FINANCE

Yale University

Yale University

NONFICTION

1ST PRIZE

JESSICA COHEN

Yale University

2ND PRIZE

MAEVE HERBERT

Yale University

3RD PRIZE

MARGARET BARTLEY

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ELIZABETH ALLISON

Yale University

JANET GATES

University of Texas, El Paso

HELEN L. FOUNTAIN

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NEW ENGLAND PRIMER

A short story

BY DONALD HALL

Illustration by Marc Yankus

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In 1937, Depression times, my mother left my father and me. I was seven years old, and she ran away with the town lawyer, my father's friend J. B. Burton. My father was Scytheville's doctor. While my father was in his office one morning, my mother packed a suitcase, left a letter, and walked to J. B. Burton's house. When I came back from school, my mother was absent, and my father stood silent in the kitchen. "Your mother won't be with us," he said in a cracked voice. I didn't dare ask him why.

It was December; the kitchen range was hot as he fried eggs for our supper. I watched him burn a letter in the firebox. When we sat at the kitchen table, he broke his yolks and pushed his eggs around but did not eat them. "Your mother won't live with us anymore," he said. I wept, howled, and clung to him.

"Minerva is leaving town with Mr. Burton," he told me. I was bewildered as well as bereft. I had never heard of a mother who left her family. I asked him why, and he only held me tighter. Anguish and rage began that almost governed my life.

I don't know how or why the love affair happened. My parents did not quarrel in my presence, and I saw them kiss and hug. His office occupied the front room of our house, so he was home most of the time, but he kept busy. He remained in his office mornings, with appointments, and in the afternoons he drove his Model A to visit old people without automobiles. Weeknights he was exhausted, and often went to bed early while my mother read magazines: *Collier's*, *Life*, *The Saturday Evening Post*. My parents were together only on Sundays—if there were no medical emergencies. She must have been lonely, and J. B. Burton could have courted her in the afternoons, when I was in school and my father was making house calls.

After she left, he spoke of her only when he had to. People didn't bring the subject up. I found a neighbor setting a loaf of bread on our porch. She did not meet my eyes but said, "Billy." A pot of beans also turned up. The most anyone said to my father was "I'm sorry," treating my mother's flight like a death in the family.

At school a boy teased me: "Where'd your mother go, Billy?" Most of us were too young to know what men and women did. Our teacher flushed red and said, "That will be enough, Tom!" No one said anything again. For weeks my friends avoided playing with me. When they returned, I was aware of a blank place in our acquaintance.

My mother, as I remember her from my early childhood, was slim and vivacious, with large brown eyes, bobbed black hair, and red, red lipstick. She moved quickly as she cooked and cleaned house; then sometimes she sat staring for an hour, smoking cigarettes. Often she held me in her lap. Some occasions remained tender in my memory, and were therefore corroded by what happened. When I was five, a small circus came to Blue River, ten miles away. My father dropped my mother and me off outside the tent on a Saturday afternoon and then picked us up after he had made his house calls. I remember the heightening buzz of voices, crowds jostling, the animal smells. We sat on pine benches watching high-wire acts and clowns, a droopy lion and its droopier tamer.

My mother wrapped an arm around me and called me "Billy, Billy"; we held hands. She bought me a box of Cracker Jack.

My father, Henry Francis Root, known as "Doctor Frank," was courteous, dependable, devoted to his duties, and decent without being unctuous. He had a nervous habit of cracking his knuckles, which came to irritate me. He was a *good* man, and above all he was disinterested; he was too disinterested. When my mother and J. B. Burton prepared to leave town, a week after she left us, Burton came to my father's office with a dislocated finger. I remember: We were having supper when someone knocked on the door. I opened it, and J. B. Burton stood there, with one hand holding the other. "Your father?" he said, not looking me in the eye.

My father had followed me to the door. Burton showed him the skewed, swollen finger. My father snapped it straight without speaking. Burton winced, but made not a sound.

"Billy," my father said, "get me that roll of adhesive tape on the table next to my desk."

I brought it in. I could not look at J. B. Burton, and my father concentrated on the finger. He could tape one digit to another without conversation. My father scissored and taped, impassively, behaving as a doctor was supposed to behave. Finished, he pointed to the door. When Burton left, he said nothing; he did not have the temerity to thank my father.

When Burton and my mother drove away from Scytheville, she did not say good-bye. On her journey west she sent me postcards telling me that she loved me and missed me. The cards bore postmarks from Albany and Buffalo. A birthday present arrived from Chicago. Then came a postcard from Reno, Nevada, and two months later my father told me that my mother had divorced him and married the man she was with. He would not say "J. B. Burton."

At first his sorrow and shock were visible only in his silence and a tremor in his hands. I wept when I went to bed, as quietly as I could, imitating his reserve. One night I woke from sleep to hear him weeping also. He continued his daily routine, more slowly, his energy depleted at thirty-seven. He lost weight. In the evenings he helped me with my homework, and on Saturdays he took me in the car when he visited patients. *He showed me cellar holes and abandoned smithies, the ruins of a New Hampshire that had been prosperous until the Civil War. Mornings my father saw that I was dressed and made me breakfast. Neighbor women took turns taking care of me after school, but such arrangements could not go on forever. My father looked for a housekeeper who would clean house, stay with me when I came home from school, and cook supper.*

Even in the Depression, Scytheville was relatively prosperous. Not every small town had its own doctor. The mill laid off some hands—farmers sharpened their old scythes thin as oak leaves rather than buying new ones—but many citizens had jobs, and Scytheville Academy kept going, with day students and a few boarders. Like many American towns, Scytheville paired itself with a poorer cousin. The shack people lived in Liberty, four miles away. If a Scytheville housewife's arthritis precluded washing and cooking, she went to Liberty for household help.

At that time families were known to be either "good" or "bad." Liberty had good impoverished families (as did Scytheville), who ate from big gardens, canned, boiled maple sap for sugar, kept a pig, cut down trees for heat, and shot a deer every November. They lived with plenty of food and warmth. The bad people in Liberty survived on hard cider, with intervals of seasonal work.

Thus, when my father needed a housekeeper, he looked to Liberty. First he hired Mrs. Willow, a widow who spent the day listening to radio soap operas, fifteen minutes each: *Ma Perkins*; *Just Plain Bill*; *Mary Noble*, *Backstage Wife*. She talked as if the plots and the people were real: "That Lorenzo! He ought to get a job like anyone else." "I wonder

how *old* Ma is. She sounds *old*." After school I partook of her habit, and late in the afternoon we listened together to a cowboy singer. Mrs. Willow seldom cleaned or tidied, and dust piled on top of clutter. My father had to let her go.

To replace Mrs. Willow he found Ruby Moody, also from Liberty, who turned fourteen in 1938 and dropped out of school to earn money for her family. When Ruby arrived, she was an awkward schoolgirl, tall, with broad shoulders, who never smiled. My father introduced me in his courtly fashion, and Ruby looked straight into me. "What do I do with him?"

If she was shy, she covered it up with a grudging demeanor. She was certainly gruff with me. Her lower lip stuck out as if it expressed petulance. I liked it that she was a girl—but she scared me. I sought her favor. At first her cooking was primitive: overcooked vegetables, chicken, boiled potatoes, more lard than seemed possible. My father complimented her. She needed compliments. He found her a Fannie Farmer cookbook. After a while she looked more comfortable, and I was pleased to come home to her after school. "What did you do today?" she said, maybe as she made biscuits.

"Nothing," I said. "Can you play?"

"In a minute."

The summer I was eight, my father took me with him on his house calls, sometimes to remote places. Once he stopped our new Packard on an old wood road up Biscuit Hill, nearly to Liberty, when the car could go no farther. Horses, or more likely oxen, had hauled timber here, over great granite lumps that would smash a crankcase. We walked, keeping to the ruts. My father carried his black bag, and I walked beside him, avoiding poison ivy and thorny blackberry bushes. "Where are we going?" I said.

"To Belle's shack," he said. "You remember Belle?"

I didn't know her last name, but I knew who Belle was. Everybody did. The woods were full of old men who lived alone, nature's bachelors; Belle was the only woman.

She was eighty years old. She did not live quite alone, because she had a sixty-year-old son named Gospel, who was feeble-minded and lived mostly in the woods. I'd never seen him. I asked my father about Belle and Gospel. "Well, they say she was born on a farm where her shack is, ran off in a family way when she was nineteen, and came back with Gospel twenty years later. She's got a dug well, a pump, and an outhouse. She sends me a penny postcard when she wants me to look in on her. It's her hips. Aspirin's the only thing."

"What about Gospel's father?" I asked, thinking, of course, of my missing mother.

"Nobody knows about the father." By this time I knew just enough not to ask another question.

We passed dense birches. Saplings rose beside fallen

trees. We passed a cellar hole that my father called “the Buzzle place.” We walked past stone walls among the birches, past woods that had once been pasture, and through a grown-over apple orchard and a hemlock forest. The trees stopped as we entered a clearing, where we saw a great patch of hollyhocks in front of Belle’s shack. An old dog howled once when he saw us; then he dragged himself upright and wagged his tail. My father scratched him behind the ears.

Belle’s place was made of unpainted boards nailed upright with deerskin stapled onto them. “She made her shack with what was left of the farmhouse,” my father said. “She must have pulled that captain’s chair out of the old place.”

“Doctor Frank,” Belle said. She took her small glasses off, to see me better, and I saw deep red marks high at the sides of her nose, where the glasses pinched. She wore a man’s shoes without laces, and she limped.

Belle waved us into her one-room house and took a black pot off the single chair. She filled a kettle, dipping the water out of a pail, and opened the drafts on her rusty wood stove. A shape embossed on the oven door looked like a peacock’s tail. Her stomach pushed into the stove, leaving her apron black. She found a jar of Nescafé. “All you have to do is pour hot water over it,” she said.

While Belle and my father talked about her miseries, I looked around the shack. I saw a cigar box of eyeglasses like the ones she was wearing. Why did she keep a whole box? In other boxes, nailed to a two-by-four, I saw buttons, beads, knitting needles, a crochet hook. Against the wall I saw shelves of canning: beans, peas, shelled corn, a pint of tomatoes, honey in combs. I saw a Temperance Pledge. I saw a bugle hanging from a nail. A small forest of canes grew out of a milk can.

My father measured out pills for Belle, probably samples from Bayer. “We used to get aspirin from Germany,” my father said.

“New war started yet?” Belle asked. “We in it?”

He shook his head. “Not yet,” he said.

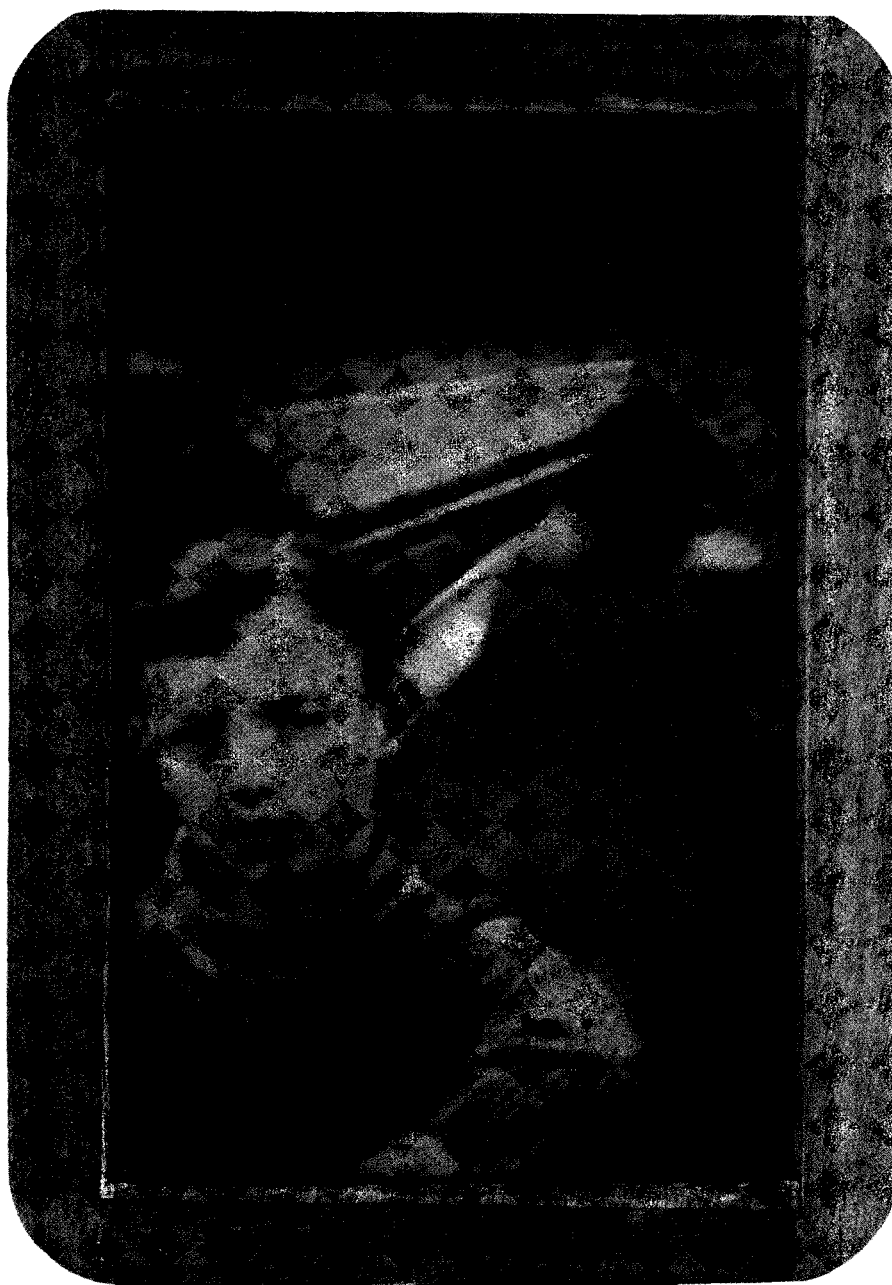
She looked at me. “I remember the soldier boys come back from the Civil War,” she said. “Do you see my bugle?”

I knew about the Civil War; my father read books about it. His grandfather had fought at Vicksburg in the Eleventh New Hampshire Infantry; we had a blue cap he’d worn.

“That’s a Union bugle, brought back by a man walked home from Virginia.”

The door darkened and the figure of a big man filled it, tall, with a huge belly. He was carrying small birch logs toward the wood stove. When his eyes adjusted from outdoors, he saw my father and me. He dropped the logs and ran out the door into the woods.

“Gospel’s a good boy,” Belle said, “even if he’s not right.” I peeked out the door to see if he was lurking somewhere. Belle said, “Gospel and that bugle come from the same place.” She made a sound like a giggle. She looked at my father, no longer addressing me. “The whited sepulchre brought it back from the war. When I showed, he fired me.”



"Well," my father said, getting up from the chair, stretching, his black bag in his hand, "you've done right by yourself and Gospel. Why did you call him Gospel?"

"When I came back, everything was tumbled down, even the mill. I called him Gospel because his father was a whited sepulchre."

Belle turned to me. "It's like that old primer," she said. From the jumble of her shack she picked up a small square book. "*The New England Primer*," she said, as she handed it to me. I saw mottled pages with old printing and woodcuts stained with age. "My mother taught me my ABCs from that book," she said.

Then she looked at my father, smiling without teeth. "In Adam's fall," she said, "we sinnèd all."

Ruby slept upstairs in the spare room and returned to Liberty every other weekend, taking her salary with her. My father paid her five dollars a week plus room and board. Ruby changed, became less gruff—disarmed, I think, by my father's courtliness. We were both taken with her.

Along with cleaning house and washing and ironing and cooking, Ruby's job was me. I loved coming home from school. When I was nine, and the war started in Europe, I was in love with her. She agreed to wait and marry me when I was old enough. We played together at first, tossing a tennis ball back and forth, taking our turns on a swing that hung from a stout branch of maple. We pushed each other to get started, and then pumped and soared. I liked touching her buttocks. We walked together upstream past the scythe mill and climbed on stones that had supported other mills. She had heard about Belle but not about Gospel.

She never spoke of my mother. When I woke up angry in the night, I soothed myself by thinking of Ruby.

Once, when she was pushing me on the swing, I fell onto the roots of a tree.

"Billy!" Ruby said. "Are you all right? I'll get your father. You poor dear!"

When I stood and shook myself and convinced her that I was all right, she took me inside to the sofa and rubbed my bruised leg. I didn't want her to stop.

"Once my father fell and broke his arm," she said. "He was drunk." I heard her turn angry. "He hits my mother."

I hated knowing that Ruby came from such a house, such a family, but I knew Liberty's reputation.

My father worried that I played too little with boys my own age, and he encouraged visits from my fourth-grade friends. I had only twelve classmates in our red one-room school. Maybe my father asked Ruby not to play with me so much. It seemed now that when I wanted to toss a ball with her, she had too much to do. Or maybe she just grew older. By the time she turned sixteen she had lost her childishness, leaving me a little lonesome—though sometimes she still let me push her on the swing.

In the spring of 1941 Otto Buzzard, the older brother of my schoolmate Tom, found reasons to drop by the house. He would knock at the door to the kitchen, where Ruby baked and cooked. His blond hair straggled under an Esso cap. He would say, "Corn's up" or "What're you doing?" or "Looks like snow." Half the time his mouth slacked open as he stared at Ruby in her long housedress. She scuttled about, aware of Otto's attentions. At ten I knew enough to be jealous of him.

My father decided that Ruby ought to continue her education. She could read and write, but she hadn't read much of anything. My father wanted to keep her from being a Liberty Moody, or a Mrs. Otto Buzzard of Scytheville. Near us lived a married woman who had been a teacher, and my father hired her to tutor Ruby in grammar, math, geography, reading, and general science. Algebra was hard. Ruby took to her studies reluctantly, but she wanted to please my father. When Otto dropped by, she put him off: No, she could not go out walking with him. She had homework. Otto's visits dwindled, and he joined the Army three months after Pearl Harbor.

Every evening my father and Ruby and I sat together around the parlor wood stove. I did homework or read stories about aviators in the Great War, while another war was beginning. My father read medical journals and history books. I could tell he was really taken with a book when he didn't crack his knuckles. I lifted my eyes from my school book to watch Ruby's face as she worked at her studies or looked into my father's history books, practicing her reading. At seventeen she started to be beautiful without knowing it. Her young face, with its strong features, frowned down on her schoolwork, her lower lip protruding only a little. She wasn't always good-natured. One night my father cracked his knuckles more than ever and kept quoting phrases from the book he was reading. "The Battle of Bennington," he might say, not realizing that he was speaking out loud. Ruby threw her algebra book on the floor and slammed the door of her room.

Ruby was still walking to Liberty. Twice a month she went there on a Sunday, taking her dollars. One night my father and I were eating a cold Sunday supper when Ruby came in the back door. We both cried out. Her eyes were black and her lip was split; blood was on her chin. She wept as we looked at her. My father dampened a washcloth and cleaned off the blood, examining her mouth and her eyes. "I ain't never going back there," she said.

"I'm not ever going back," my father said. "Your father?"

Ruby nodded. "My father. While my mother watched, and my brothers. He said book learning wasn't for women."

"You can stay here. Until you go to college."

Ruby was admitted, by examination, to Scytheville Academy for teacher training her senior year. She did well enough to be accepted at the normal school in Keene, in 1943. She was nineteen, and thought about teaching kindergarten. My father paid for her tuition

and room and board, which didn't add up to much. To visit us on weekends she took a train into Boston's North Station and another out to Blue River. My father met her at the depot, at 12:38 P.M. on Saturday. She came every weekend, cooked and studied, and went back Sunday night. Something was changing in her. She had a life away from us. She talked about sociology, or the girl she worked with in chemistry lab. She showed us B+ papers, and my father praised her. Weekdays were lonesome for us, but we made do. A widow named Mrs. Ewell came to cook for us.

One day Bert Bottoms, the RFD man, burst into my father's office to cry out that Belle was hurt. "Bad hurt, up to her shack." When she had not emptied her mailbox for days—flyers, I suppose—Bert had walked in and found her lying in her cabin, half out of her mind. Gospel ran away when he saw Bert. My father called the Blue River ambulance, met it at the wood road, and showed the way. Belle raved that she wouldn't leave Gospel, but the men lifted her onto the stretcher and took her to the hospital in Blue River. She had broken a hip.

She fretted about Gospel until she died, eighty-six years old. The town buried her. I wondered what would happen to the Civil War bugle. By now I knew what she had meant by "whited sepulchre." I wondered if anybody ever found the little square book.

My father and Bert and others looked for Gospel. They only glimpsed him as he ran to hide. Each week Bert left two loaves of bread and a pound of rat cheese for him, wrapped in tinfoil and tied in a bundle against raccoons and squirrels. When he came back each time, the previous week's food was gone.

That same year I saw my father and Ruby kissing in the kitchen when they thought I was upstairs. I was horrified. My father was forty-four years old, and Ruby was twenty! My father was plump and balding. He plodded; Ruby bounced when she walked. I was furious, and hated what they felt. By now I knew what desire was, because I woke with it every morning. Maybe her difficult early life made her seem older than other twenty-year-old girls. Still, Ruby's youthful beauty is clear in my memory. I can find only one picture, taken when she was nineteen, standing beside me. I was thirteen. She is smiling and leaning my way, the light behind her; I can see the curve of her leg through her dress. Her hair is shaggy as it hangs toward me. Her lower lip looks sensual, instead of seeming to pout.

One Sunday they took me aside and told me: when Ruby finished her degree, she and my father would marry.

"We're happy," my father said. "It must be strange for you."

"I'm thinking about starting a nursery school in Blue River," Ruby said, suddenly older and separate. "It's getting big enough. It's prosperous." I remembered when Ruby would not have used a word like "prosperous." I suppose she thought of a private nursery school.

Grudgingly I came to accept the idea of their marriage, though I know I withdrew from my happy father. He withdrew a little from me. I was jealous of both of them, but grateful that Ruby would remain in my life. When I was old enough to attend college, I would come home to Ruby and my father. And I could come home to Miriam, an academy student I was sweet on.

At birthdays and Christmases I received my mother's packages, now from California, with notes signed "Your loving Mother." My father had a Christmas card signed by Minerva but not by J.B. Naturally his hurt had diminished. Then, early in 1945, on a Thursday, I found in the day's mail a thick letter addressed, in my mother's handwriting, to my father. When I handed it to him, he looked troubled and took it with him into his office, closing the door. An hour later he emerged—pale, shaking, eyes red—to Mrs. Ewell's supper. I asked him what was wrong. I knew it was my mother's letter. He blew his nose on the handkerchief he carried in his jacket pocket. "I can't say anything now."

The next day he canceled his office hours and drove away by himself. When he came back for supper, he was silent. I was frightened. He touched my arm. He said, "I'm sorry, Billy," and resumed his silence. Saturday, before he drove to pick up Ruby at Blue River, he told me that he and Ruby would take a ride before they came home. I knew that they would talk, and that they would talk because of my mother's letter. When they returned, Ruby climbed quickly to her room. My father asked me into his office.

"I telegraphed money to California. To your mother. She's coming back."

I could not believe what I heard. "*Ruby* ..." I said.

"I telegraphed your mother money for the train. She has nothing and nobody. She's sick."

"I don't want her back!"

"She's sick. Very sick. She's penniless. I have to take her back." I saw my father start to weep, and I knew he was not weeping for my mother. "Her husband"—my father still wouldn't say the name—"shot himself two months ago. Bankrupt. Minerva has no place to go. Ruby knows that I have to take her in. Ruby will keep on at college and still come here weekends. Minerva will die, but it might take a long time. I told Ruby that she was free." I ran upstairs to my room, in a rage against both my mother and my father.

My father took me with him to pick up my mother at the Blue River depot. I didn't know the frail, frowning woman with one suitcase who gazed at us. Her illness exaggerated her age, and she was wobbly when she walked. My father said, "Minerva," and picked up her bag.

"Thank you," she said. Her forehead was creased; her mouth curved down. "You look better than me. The trains are worse than ever." She looked at me. "You're big now,

Billy,” she said. “You’re too big for that coat. I knew you’d take me back, though I don’t know why you should.” When she hugged me, I felt cold coming from her bones. Maybe it was my bones the cold came from.

On the drive back she said little. “It’s as grimy here as ever,” she said. “In California the sun shines.”

Her fingers shook when she lit a cigarette. My heart wanted to stop itself. I loathed this bony whiner.

That night my father cracked his knuckles incessantly. He cracked them incessantly every night. “Stop that,” my mother snapped. He kept on. Every night I left them in the dining room or the parlor and went to my room.

Ruby returned four weekends in a row and slept on the sofa, because the spare room was Minerva’s, filled with medicine smells. One Sunday morning Minerva’s voice rose in a tirade at Ruby. Who did she think she *was*, her nose in a book when Mrs. Ewell needed help in the kitchen? My father shouted, “*Shut up*, Minerva!” I had never heard him use such words.

That afternoon Ruby and I slipped out of the house to take a walk like our old walks. When I spoke bitterly about my mother, Ruby did not hush me. On the fourth weekend my father did his Saturday-morning rounds and then met Ruby’s train. While he was gone, my mother laughed without stopping, an eerie sound. When my father brought Ruby home, Minerva’s laughter turned into uncontrollable weeping. I did not know it, but the intermittent crying and laughing were symptoms of her disease. She had ALS, which people called Lou Gehrig’s disease.

The weekend visits became intolerable for Ruby. My father said that she needn’t come home all the time. The next weekend, without having warned us, she did not step down from the train—nor the next weekend, nor the next. My father wrote her daily at her boardinghouse in Keene. After two weeks his letters began to return, and then a letter addressed to Ruby arrived at the house. My father opened it and read. The dean of women at Ruby’s college wrote that because of Miss Moody’s absence from classes, and because Miss Moody had left her boardinghouse, the dean was forced to conclude that Miss Moody was no longer a student. Unless she received a satisfactory explanation ...

My father and I left my mother with Mrs. Ewell. We drove to Keene. Ruby’s landlady told us that Ruby had packed her suitcases and moved out three weeks earlier, and that she had stopped going to classes before that. A young man in a Model T had driven her away. We headed to Scytheville in a double silence of anxiety and melancholy. “Where could she go?” I said.

“To Liberty,” my father said, and he turned off the Scytheville road. When we parked by the Moody shack, its door was hanging open and the left side of the porch drooped down. The nearest neighbor told us that the Moodys had left town and good riddance. No, they didn’t

know about the daughter, just the Mr. and Mrs. The other children had moved out long since. One store owner knew nothing except that old Moody owed him eighteen dollars.

V-E Day. V-J Day. I overheard my father on the telephone seeking information from the New Hampshire, and later the Massachusetts, state police. No, he told them, he would not file a missing-person report. He hired a detective, who was unable to trace her.

My mother lay in bed and rose by holding onto furniture when she had to use the upstairs bathroom my father had installed for her. Slobbering, she scolded Mrs. Ewell. My quiet father yelled at her, and she yelled back or went on one of her weeping jags. I hated my house. As she became frailer and more depressed, she sometimes spent days without speaking. She had to stay in bed all day. Bedpans. The visiting nurse helped, but Mrs. Ewell was running out of strength. My father hired a nurse’s helper, who drove from Blue River. Some days my mother thanked my father over and over. Once she patted me on the hand and said, “Billy, Billy.” I pulled my hand away.

By the time I entered my last year at Scytheville Academy, I had lost all interest in stone walls and cellar holes. They were the vacancy and rottenness of this place. I came home from the academy as late as I could, often not until supper-time. I smoked cigarettes in the woods with other academy criminals. At home I didn’t answer when spoken to. If my father spoke to me sternly, I left the house. My father was losing me as he had lost everything else.

In the autumn of 1947, with my mother sinking into paralysis, I went to Boston University, planning to go on to business school. I would be rich and travel the world and never return to Scytheville.

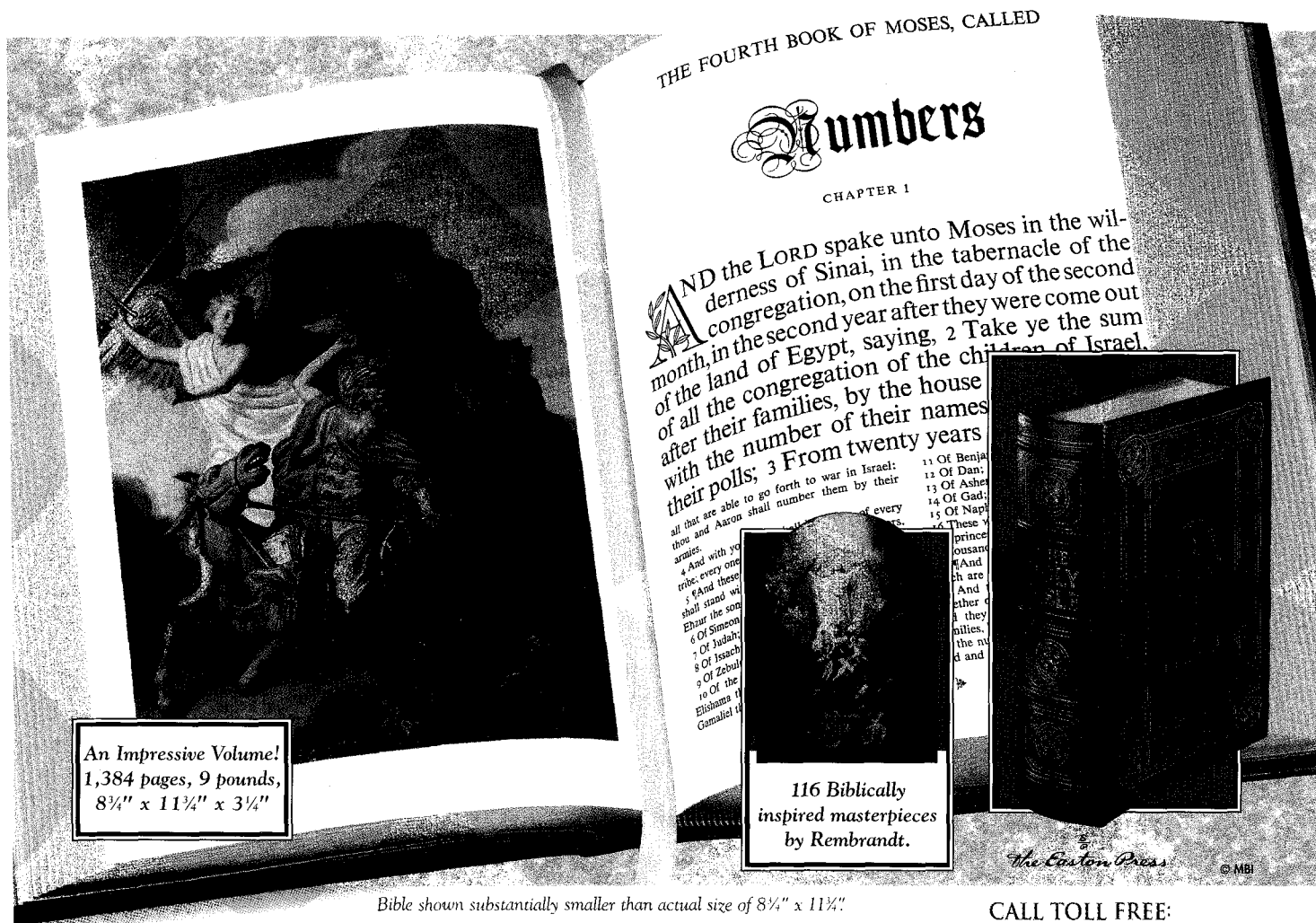
My mother died the next year. After the funeral I saw her buried in the family plot and then hurried back to Boston. I accelerated my studies, hoping for early admission to Harvard Business School, and rarely came home. My father moved with a ponderous slowness, although he was only forty-eight. Mrs. Ewell, now an old woman, could barely keep my father’s house in order. He took dinner at the Scytheville Inn, sitting alone night after night until he was joined by Mason Thirlwell, an old neighbor and a widower. After dinner they played checkers.

I let my courses absorb me. I felt superior to my father, with a young man’s arrogance, because his exaggerated goodness had wasted his life. I asked him to call me William, and corrected him if he forgot. My father took long naps on Sunday afternoons, although his working week was less strenuous. Old people without cars had died off; the young drove to Blue River to see their internists.

I visited Scytheville a few times a year. One Sunday afternoon in 1951, the summer before I went to Harvard, I paid a call on my old girlfriend, Miriam, and then took my father’s 1947 Ford and drove around the countryside, up

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dirt roads and down, past cellar holes where I had waited in the car as my father visited cantankerous patients. My father had told me that Gospel's food now went untouched. When I found myself on the outskirts of Liberty, on impulse I turned into town to the street where Ruby had grown up. To my surprise the house was standing, the porch made level by stacked concrete blocks. A crone rocked on the porch. After parking I walked up the creaking steps. Maybe this woman was the remains of Ruby's mother. "Are you Mrs. Moody?" I asked.

"Who be you?" she said from her toothless mouth.

"I used to know... the Moodys," I said. I was afraid to ask.

"Well, I don't know ye... He's been dead a long time ago."

A girl of about three clattered out onto the porch through the torn screen door, and I saw in the shadow behind her a tall woman's figure.

Ruby's hand lifted to cover her mouth, and I had time to see that her lower lip no longer pouted forward. "Billy," she

said. I didn't mind "Billy" from Ruby. "You've grown up." She dropped her hand; some of her front teeth were missing. Many of Liberty's residents were toothless by thirty-five. Her hair was limp; she was ragged in pants and a worn checked shirt. She poked a cigarette into her mouth, and she did not smile. I could begin to see her mother in Ruby.

"I didn't want to tell you, your father, that I was back. It's only two months."

"Where have you been?" I said. "We looked for you."

Ruby shrugged. "I kept myself away. I didn't want to fool myself. I heard your mother died." She held the girl by both shoulders. "This is my daughter," she said. "Dorothy. I wait on table down to the Liberty Tavern. This is where me and Dorothy belong. Don't tell your father I'm here."

"He'll find out," I said.

Ruby and her daughter backed into the dark hallway. "I had her by myself," she said as she disappeared.

Driving back toward Scytheville, I parked the car to walk by the stream where Ruby and I had walked among the ghost mills. I stayed until late, angry at both my parents, at Ruby, at the place where I was born. In two days I would return to Boston, leaving my father—and now leaving Ruby, who had turned back into a Liberty Moody. I couldn't bear to tell my father, who was already so broken. It would not bother him that she had a child, but it would destroy him that she had become a Moody again.

AUGUST WALK

The forest fungal, and a seethe of rain.

Indian pipes prod white, crooked fingers up through mulch,
boletus and inky caps glutton in the dank.

Lichen glues coral to moist granite.

We follow cleft hoofprints

of a bull moose, you striding ahead, I lagging;

you reading woods lore—ice-stripped bark, deer-nibble,

last winter's furry, matted fisher-cat spoor; I distracted,

musings. The soil springs at our tread, mossbanks

bristle with spores. Rainlight shivers down.

The felled giant sugar maple has broken out

in boles: baroque, all bulging eyes,

beaks, foreheads, claws, diseased

and dark as a mahogany Roman choir stall.

Off the moose path now, it's an old farm you seek:

rock piles from last century's sheepfolds;

inward-lapsing cellar hole;

a tumble where the chimney stood;

at the threshold, by the granite doorslab,

a cluster of weed-choked lilies sprouted from lilies

the farm wife planted before the Civil War.

The road is a soft cesarean scar in tufted grass.

Each rain-glossed leaf emits a stab of green.

Somewhere here survives the idea of home.

—ROSANNA WARREN

My father was a letter writer, not fond of the telephone. Every Wednesday in Boston, across the Charles River from the rest of Harvard, I received a handwritten letter of some length, his Sunday morning's work. His language was formal in its constructions, but it allowed a show of affection. I wrote him back, not so well or so often. In my mind I continued to see Ruby and her daughter, Ruby with her hand over her mouth, enjoining me not to tell my father.

The summer of 1953 I spent two weeks in Scytheville, seeing old school friends, including Miriam, who was now married, and visiting my father, who worked still fewer hours. One afternoon he and I drove and walked, mostly in silence, on the old dirt roads lined by stone walls. Maybe this would be the last time, I thought. I had come back to say good-bye to everything. Businesses were recruiting and I had already interviewed for jobs in Chicago, Los Angeles, even London. As we walked, my father puffed, although he had lost weight.

Once, while my father had office hours, I drove to Liberty, where I did and did not want to see Ruby. I watched her hanging laundry in her back yard, smoking and wearing shorts on a hot August day, with her daughter handing her wet wash. She was another impoverished young mother of Liberty. I paused on the road to watch, and when she turned to look in my direction, I drove on.

I ate at the Scytheville Inn with my father and Mason

Thirlwell, and kibitzed while they played checkers. My father's life was over at fifty-three. Why had no one told him that Ruby had come back to Liberty? The town's manners were silence and reticence.

Not long after I went back to Boston, a letter arrived from my father. Calmly, expressing no dread or anxiety, he told me that he had cancer of the colon. I remembered how tired he had seemed, and that he had lost weight. He had observed blood in his stool, and at Blue River Hospital a barium enema had revealed a mass high in his colon. It would be malignant, he told me, but it was small, and his chances were good that the cancer would not return. He was to be operated on the next day. I was on no account to leave my studies but to remain in Boston and wait for word from Mason Thirlwell. He would stay in the hospital about a week.

The next morning I borrowed a roommate's car and drove to Blue River. When I arrived, my father was in the recovery room. The surgeon confirmed that the tumor was malignant but small and within the walls of the colon.

I was permitted to enter the recovery room, where nurses scuttled among patients just returned from surgery. My father was sedated and in pain, but his usual calmness showed through. I went into town for lunch, and returned to see him in intensive care. The next day I sat beside his bed. We could talk easily when he first had morphine, but he would quickly become sleepy. I stayed with him for two days and then returned to my case studies and left Mason Thirlwell to visit him. When he returned home, weak, neighbors would help, and Mason, and a visiting nurse.

But I worried about him. Mason was a good friend, but I could not see him as a caretaker. Then I thought of an improbable solution, for my father's comfort and my own. When Scytheville needed help, it went to Liberty. The next weekend—my father was due home on Monday—I borrowed the car again and drove not to Blue River or Scytheville but to Liberty. Ruby was in her nightgown at noon, fixing lunch for Dorothy. I saw shiny new teeth. She seemed frightened to see me; I must have looked anxious. She asked, "Your father?"

I told her about the cancer. I told her she must come back to the house where she had lived from fourteen to twenty. My father would need her. She shook her head. "My mother's dead," she said. "But I have Dorothy."

"You loved my father," I said. "You still do. He never stopped loving you. Come back with Dorothy and move in. Take care of him when he comes home from the hospital." She kept shaking her head no. "He needs you," I said. "When he's better, you can go back to Liberty if you want."

By the time Dorothy came in from play, Ruby had packed their things into paper bags. She gave her daughter lunch and then took her aside to say that they were going to Scytheville to care for a sick man she used to know. Dorothy was a solemn child. She nodded without speaking.

Ruby worried about how she looked; she worried

about her clothes. In the Kmart at Blue River I bought new clothes for her and for Dorothy. Ruby seemed to pick her new things almost at random in her distraction. She and Dorothy changed into new clothes in a dressing room, and left behind the garments they had been wearing.

As we drove toward Scytheville, Ruby continued to fret: "Maybe I'm doing the wrong thing again. I shouldn't have let your mother drive me out."

She went pale as we approached town. Dorothy was silent, as if caught in a dream. I helped them carry their few things into the house Ruby knew so well, and then drove with her to the hospital. We left Dorothy with Mason Thirlwell, who was clearly uncomfortable with a little girl. Alone with my father, I told him what I had done: I had brought Ruby back from Liberty, with a five-year-old daughter, and I had settled her in our house to take care of him while he was weak. He wept and shook his head. I did not know what he was thinking, but I saw that part of him was both incredulous and overjoyed. He thanked me and asked me if I had brought Ruby to the hospital. I led her from the waiting room to his bedside. They gazed at each other. "Ruby," my father said.

"Will you be all right?" Ruby asked. "Is it all right if I take care of you?" There were no tears in her eyes. "I never finished college."

"Thank heaven for Billy," my father said. "You ..." I think he wanted to tell her that he wished she had come back sooner.

"You know about Dorothy? Billy told you."

He was getting tired and showed it. My father took Ruby's hand. I tried to see the changed Ruby through his eyes: her shiny teeth, her new wrinkles.

After I returned to Harvard, Mason drove my father home to Ruby's care. I telephoned every day. In a week my father was writing me letters again. Ruby added postscripts. Most weekends I visited them. Ruby cooked in the kitchen of her girlhood, tall and reserved and handsome at twenty-nine. She had changed in a decade. She no longer bounced when she walked. Her mouth curved down and looked dour, but she stopped smoking. Gradually my father gained strength and took up his small practice again. After six weeks Ruby no longer occupied the spare room. They were married a month later in a judge's chambers in Blue River.

After graduation I returned to Scytheville to spend a week before taking a good job in Salt Lake City. Dorothy was finishing the year in the elementary school, and Ruby had a new bridge that looked natural. My father at fifty-four was more sprightly than he had been since 1945. Rarely did he crack his knuckles. On this visit I walked with both of them in the countryside among the ruins. Utah began to seem far away. My father told me that deer hunters had found Gospel's skeleton in the ruins of Belle's camp.

Back in Boston I telegraphed my regrets to Utah and looked for work in the Northeast. I settled in Portland, Maine, and married a fellow student from the business school. Dorothy grew tall like her mother and became the joy of my father's late middle age. When my marriage fell apart, I was ready to move from Portland to Boston, with a job similar to my previous one. I liked to visit Scytheville, where Ruby and my father lived quietly and with clear affection. Dorothy was in her first year at the academy and already thinking about college. Life seemed almost reparable. Then I remembered my mother's leaving and returning, Ruby's exile, my father alone, my divorce. In Adam's fall / We sinned all.

A year after I moved to Boston, nine years after Ruby's return, she telephoned me at my office to tell me that my father had had a heart attack. I notified my staff and drove to Blue River on the new highway. My father was in intensive care again, and was switched to the cardiac unit a day later. When Ruby left the room to have lunch, he told me that judging from his experience, he probably didn't have more than a year or two. My father was sixty-two, and Ruby was thirty-eight.

He died nineteen months later, with Ruby and Dorothy beside him. We buried him next to Minerva, according to his wishes, with a place for Ruby on his other side.

I go to Scytheville often, to see Ruby and Dorothy. We take walks where Ruby and I rambled so many years ago. The old people have died off. Only Ruby and I can discern, among the stones and the new growth, the remains of the old farms and cellar holes. For Dorothy, now teaching at the academy, we are archaeologists at the site of Troy. Summer cottages and retirement communities are beginning to take over, filled with people who love the countryside but don't know its history. Senior citizens from the suburbs of Boston have founded a Scytheville-Liberty Historical Association and a community center. Grandchildren of the old shack people now mow the lawns and plough the snow.

Driving up Biscuit Hill one day with Ruby and Dorothy, I pulled off the road into some ruts beside newly bulldozed forest. Developers were advertising a new retirement community. The ruts looked like Belle's old wood road, and the three of us walked on flattened sand beside pushed-over birches and hemlocks. Huge yellow engines squatted in the weekend silence. Clearing had just begun, and we walked across the space easily to look into old woods that would become lawns—as, two hundred years earlier, virgin forest had yielded acre by acre to pasture and hayfield. One hollyhock raised a skinny stem. I saw a heap of boards soon to be dozed into a hollow and covered with dirt. I kicked at the leaves, my heart pounding, and nudged into sight a pair of old-fashioned eyeglasses. When I squeezed them onto my nose, the landscape brightened and enlarged. Ruby tried them on, and then Dorothy. ▀

1949

NORMAN MAILER, 25, WRITES *THE NAKED AND THE DEAD*, MAKING LITERARY HISTORY BY INVENTING THE WORD "FUG" TO GET AROUND OBSCENITY LAWS. IT BECOMES A BESTSELLER AND HE IS HONORED WITH AN ELEGANT RECEPTION. THE PROVOCATEUR SHOWS UP IN A T-SHIRT AND BASEBALL CAP.



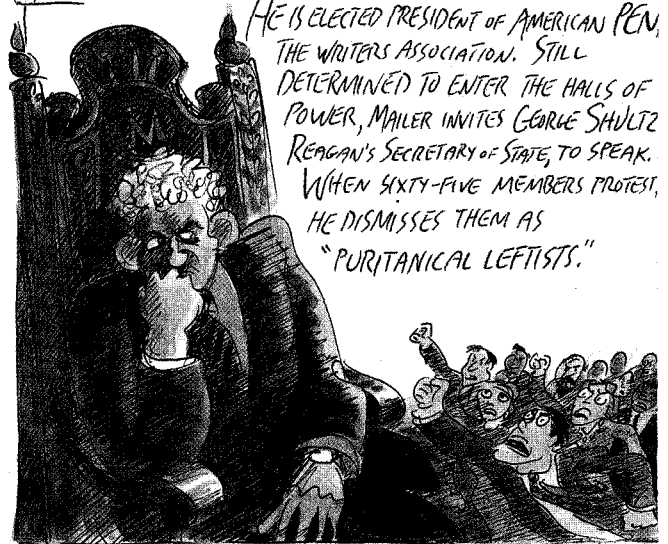
1961

HE WINS A PULITZER FOR *THE ARMIES OF THE NIGHT*, AND BEGINS A SECOND MAYORAL BID. HIS PLATFORM: GROWING ON PUBLIC HOUSING AND SHUT OFF ALL POWER ONE SUNDAY A MONTH. DRUNK, HE LECTURES HIS VOLUNTEERS: "YOU'RE JUST NOTHING BUT A BUNCH OF SPOILED PIGS." THE "SPOILED PIGS" MAKE FOR THE EXIT.



1986

HE IS ELECTED PRESIDENT OF AMERICAN PEN, THE WRITERS ASSOCIATION. STILL DETERMINED TO ENTER THE HALLS OF POWER, MAILER INVITES GEORGE SHULTZ, REAGAN'S SECRETARY OF STATE, TO SPEAK. WHEN SIXTY-FIVE MEMBERS PROTEST, HE DISMISSES THEM AS "PURITANICAL LEFTISTS."



1955

STUNG BY THE REACTION TO *THE DEER PARK*, HE SENDS A COPY TO HEMINGWAY, WANTING TO KNOW WHAT HIS IDOL THINKS OF IT. "BUT... IF YOU ANSWER WITH THE KIND OF CRAP YOU USE TO ANSWER UNPROFESSIONAL WRITERS, SYCOPHANTS, BROWN-NOSEERS, ETC., THEN [FUG] YOU."



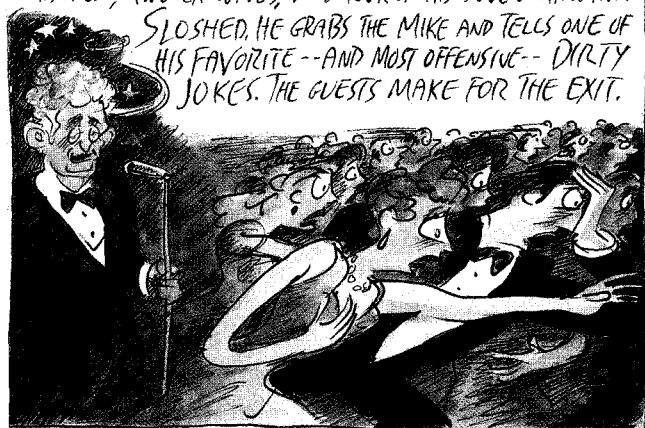
1960

AT A PARTY TO ANNOUNCE HIS CANDIDACY FOR MAYOR OF NEW YORK, HE GETS STONED AND STABS HIS WIFE, MARROWLY MISSING HER HEART. LATER HE SNEAKS INTO THE HOSPITAL AND ASKS HER NOT TO TELL THE POLICE WHAT HAPPENED. IT MIGHT BE HARMFUL TO HIS CAMPAIGN.



1973

TURNING 50, HE THROWS A PARTY TO BENEFIT AN ORGANIZATION CRITICAL OF THE CIA. AMONG THE 500 GUESTS ARE HIS WIFE, MISTRESS, TWO EX-WIVES, AND FOUR OF HIS SEVEN CHILDREN. SLOSHED, HE GRABS THE MIKE AND TELLS ONE OF HIS FAVORITE -- AND MOST OFFENSIVE -- DIRTY JOKES. THE GUESTS MAKE FOR THE EXIT.



1983

HE BECOMES FRIENDS WITH THE UNSAVORY ROY COHN, WHO GETS HIM A \$4 MILLION CONTRACT WITH RANDOMHOUSE. YEARS LATER HE ATTENDS COHN'S BIRTHDAY PARTY, DISCOVERING IT IS BEING TELEVISED, AND WISHING TO CONCEAL HIS FRIENDSHIP, HE SPENDS THE NIGHT DODGING THE CAMERAS.



1992

NOW FAVORABLY DISPOSED TO THE CIA, MAILER GLAMORIZES "THE COMPANY" IN *HARLOT'S GHOST*. AT HEADQUARTERS HE ANNOUNCES THAT HE APPROVES OF "WET JOBS" -- COVERT ASSASSINATIONS. "I COULD HAVE BEEN IN THE CIA. AND I PROBABLY WOULD HAVE BEEN PRETTY GOOD AT IT."



2002

APPROACHING 80, MAILER MAY REFLECT THAT ALTHOUGH HIS POLITICAL IDEAS HAVE CHANGED OVER THE YEARS, AT LEAST ONE CORE BELIEF REMAINS CONSTANT: "THE ULTIMATE DIRECTION OF MASTURBATION ALWAYS HAS TO BE INSANITY."



LITERARY LIVES by Edward Sorel

PURSUIITS & RETREATS

TRAVEL

LOST IN THE MAGIC KINGDOM

On being kissed by a chipmunk and other perplexities of travel in Disney World

BY RICHARD TODD

.....

“Get down to Disney World, in Florida, take your families,” President George W. Bush said, urging Americans to return to normal life after September 11. So I went. I took the family, or that part of it (my wife, Susan) that has not flown the nest. First time to Disney World for either of us. It may seem an odd place to go without children along, but Disney World has lately been wooing people like us—people who were there at the creation, as it were, who learned the lyrics to the Mouseketeer song when it was brand-new. Old people. Disney’s commercials tend to depict vacationing middle-agers going starry-eyed, but I can’t believe that the grown-up set really comes here in search of adventure and romance. (At least, I hope not.) You come because they built it. Perhaps as many as half of all Americans have been here. It’s a national institution. And, I discovered, there are certain advantages to bringing some seasoning to the experience.

I’m going to begin my report with a little story that doesn’t reflect well on me but may be instructive. We went to breakfast in our Disney “resort hotel,” called the Beach Club. In the restaurant’s foyer a large Minnie Mouse was posing with children—we had stumbled into what they call a character breakfast. Goofy was wandering around, and he came by our table. A warm smile and a wave for him. Next Chip stopped by. (Remember Chip, of Chip ‘n’ Dale, the chipmunks? I didn’t, actually, but that’s his name.) A smile for him, too, but he sought something

more. He sat down on the banquette next to Susan, put his arm around her, pointed from himself to her, pantomiming *I’m gonna steal your girl*. Reader, I could have been much, much better in this situation. I might have rubbed my eyes: *boo hoo*. Or made a long face and drawn tear lines down my cheeks. Instead I just smiled. Warmly? Camely? Rictuslike? It’s so hard to know from within. In any case, it was an inadequate response, and Chip (I now see) had little choice but to do what he did: lean over my scrambled eggs and propose a nose rub. *Still friends*. Here things went from bad to worse, and I’m afraid I said the following sentence (quietly, still smiling): “Thanks, old buddy, but I don’t think we’ll do noses today.” Should have done noses, though, because Chip still needed an exit strategy, which he found in tousling my hair and kissing me on the head.

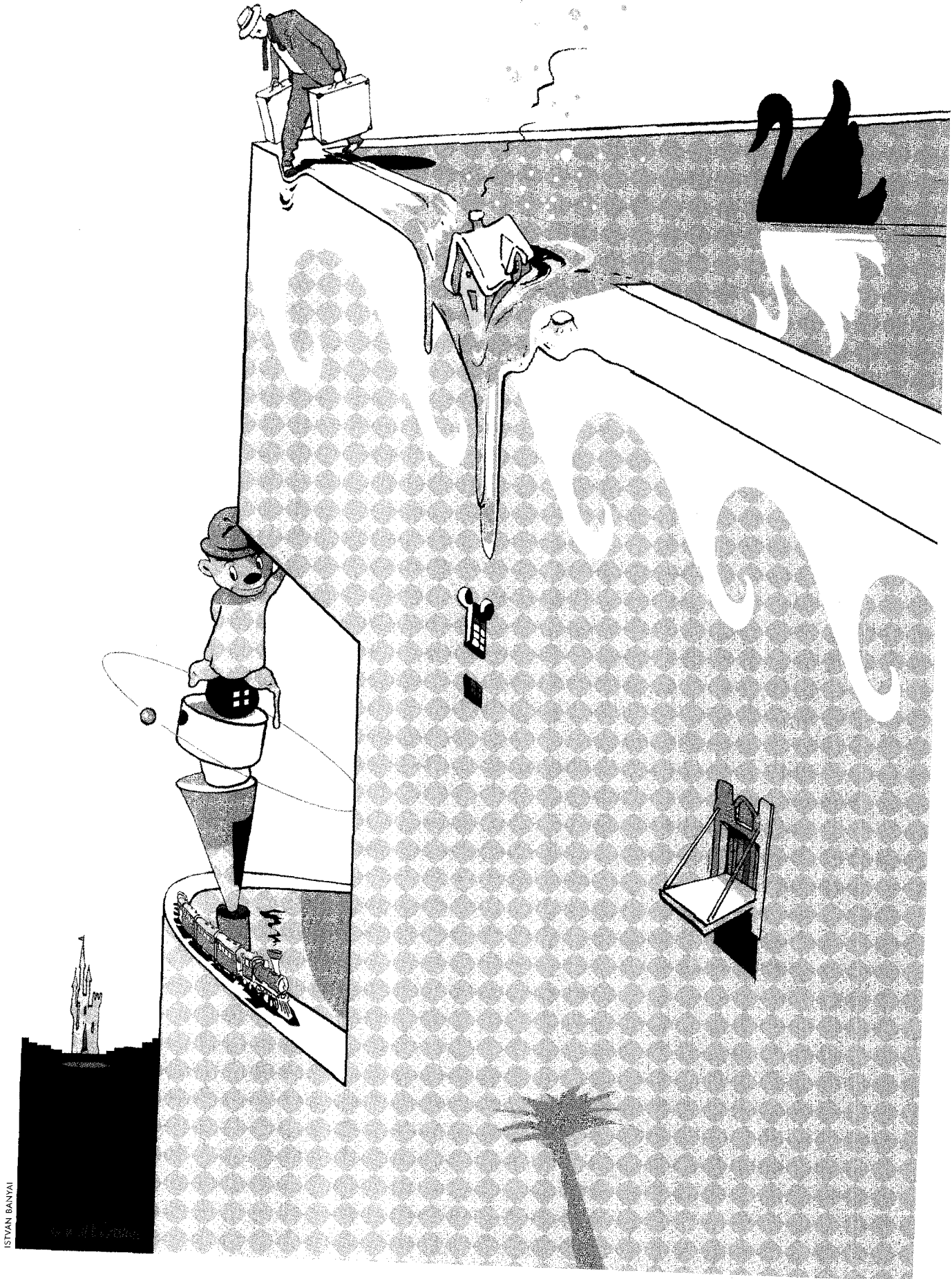
Here’s the point: At any other age this encounter would have been trouble. As a little boy I would have been scared, as a teenager mortified. As a young man I would have been (in a way that might have spoiled everybody’s fun) verbally abusive and possibly violent. Interesting thought: would Chip just take a punch and retreat, or would he swing back? But now, in mellowness, I was just ... fine. I had come to Disney World at exactly the right age.

We set off for a tour of Epcot, and on the way got our first glimpse of the scope of Disney World. (We had arrived in the middle of the night.) The Beach Club stands right next to the Yacht Club, both of them creations

of the nostalgic postmodern architect Robert A.M. Stern, incorporating outsize emblems of New England seaside buildings: gray shingles, widow’s walk, windmill. Of course they are not really beach or yacht clubs, at least insofar as such places imply membership, an ocean, boats, and so on; the only water nearby is the artificial lagoon—which is, though, equipped with a lighthouse. On the other side of the lagoon lies the BoardWalk Inn complex. It’s as though (if you’re literal-minded, like me) you can stare across the “ocean” from Nantucket to Atlantic City. Other hotels loom behind, notably the huge Swan, with its giant rooftop statues of its namesake bird. The Magic Kingdom is nowhere in sight, but you know it’s out there, along with the Animal Kingdom and various other realms. The World has some 20,000 hotel rooms altogether, and it occupies forty-seven square miles—twice the size of Manhattan. It is all around you.

Now, as we strolled next to the lagoon in the warm, midwinter Florida sun, a feeling of some pleasure arose. I have felt this way in many parts of the world—at the Great Pyramids, for instance, despite the presence of beggars, touts, and larcenous camel drivers (none of which were a problem at Disney World, of course). Everyone has experienced it: a pleasure that has little to do with fun. It’s a tourist’s sense of accomplishment: *By God, this really must be seen, and I am seeing it*.

Epcot began as a model town, a laboratory of futurism (the acronym stands for “Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow”). It maintains a few homages to technology, including a ride through the ages, sponsored by AT&T, that manages to suggest that all of human history has culminated in the Internet. But for the most part the park has morphed into a



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"World Showcase," a series of representations of countries around the world. These resemble movie sets, but they're more substantial, containing shops and restaurants. We started out at the United Kingdom, with its convincing and quite alluring Rose & Crown Pub, back to which I wanted to get for most of the rest of the tour. But the park is big, and when it was time for lunch, we had fetched up on China's shores, only halfway around, having already seen a quiet quarter of a French provincial town, a street in old Marrakesh, the Plaza San Marco, a German beer hall, a Japanese pagoda, a Norwegian stave church, and a place called simply "Outpost," which stands in for the entire Third World and contains artifacts of world trade, chiefly old Coca-Cola shipping cases. (This, with grim appropriateness, is about the only place in the World Showcase where you can't find a meal.)

We visited the Magic Kingdom the next day. What seems to be the unspoken lesson of Epcot is made explicit there, at one of the classic rides, It's a Small World. In this experience (as you may well know) one travels by gondola along a little waterway in a darkened cavern, voyaging past brightly colored dolls that represent the people and the creatures of many lands. Throughout, the Disney tune "It's a Small World After All" plays, and in the end the various symbols merge into a multicultural festival. The lesson, though, is not as easily understood as the lyric suggests. The words argue that we're basically all the same. But what it feels like, as at Epcot, is that the rest of the world is a cartoon.

If there is a problem in visiting Disney World without children, it's that you start getting concerned about things like this. A sticky little hand in each of yours goes a long way toward subduing an overactive mind. You may come here just to notch your traveler's belt. But this is not the Lincoln Memorial or the Louvre. Monuments and museums yield their meanings readily, but Disney World is complicated. You tend to Have Thoughts. Your inner voice begins to sound like

one of those hectoring French critics who can find the soul of America in a Happy Meal.

I had brought along the essay of an American critic, Stephen M. Fjellman, from his book *Vinyl Leaves: Walt Disney World and America*, that proposes the word "decontextualization" for what goes on here. Fjellman writes, "Disconnected information passes in front of us at high speed ... pieces of literary tales are retold as if they were the whole story ... history is disaggregated ... geography is mixed up ..." All of this is in the service of creating "legitimations and maps for a Disney version of the world in particular and a US corporate view in general." He's right, he's right, I guess; but talk this way and you abruptly remember that you're shooting at a mouse.

In any case, there's a lot going on in the M.K. To produce an orderly account of the place, with Main Street, U.S.A. and Tomorrowland and the steamboat ride and Cinderella Castle and the Hall of Presidents and Frontierland and all the rest, would be quite a feat. I am left with fragmentary images, scraps of notions. The dining room in Cinderella Castle looks like a dining room at Yale. Debauchery and mayhem dominate the Audio-Animatronic tableaux on the Pirates of the Caribbean ride, another dark-cavern venue. I was still puzzling over what this was trying to "say" as we emerged into the Pirates gift shop, where shiny swords and Cap'n Hook prostheses were for sale. (Disney World goes to some trouble to make sure that one's experience, whatever it means, will not be forgotten. The souvenir shops reach their pinnacle in Cinderella Castle, where a cut-crystal replica of the castle can be had for \$3,900.) Then, thinking we were heading for The Haunted Mansion, we blundered into the wrong line. An age-mate of ours, also unaccompanied by children, explained that she was in line to get Snow White's autograph. What to make of this? What exactly would you think you had when you had Snow White's autograph?

We felt we ought to take at least one ride that has earned a yellow international warning triangle ("might be

intense for children and some adults”), and that’s how we chose The Haunted Mansion, in which people travel around in chairs through—you know, an up-market haunted house. This, in fact, produced a moment of intensity, a holiday from confusion, in which I had the following clear thoughts: People die, sometimes suddenly. Suppose I died here. That would be such an irresistibly amusing anecdote for my survivors that what little dignity had accompanied this life would be lost forever. I was very glad to get out of The Haunted Mansion alive.

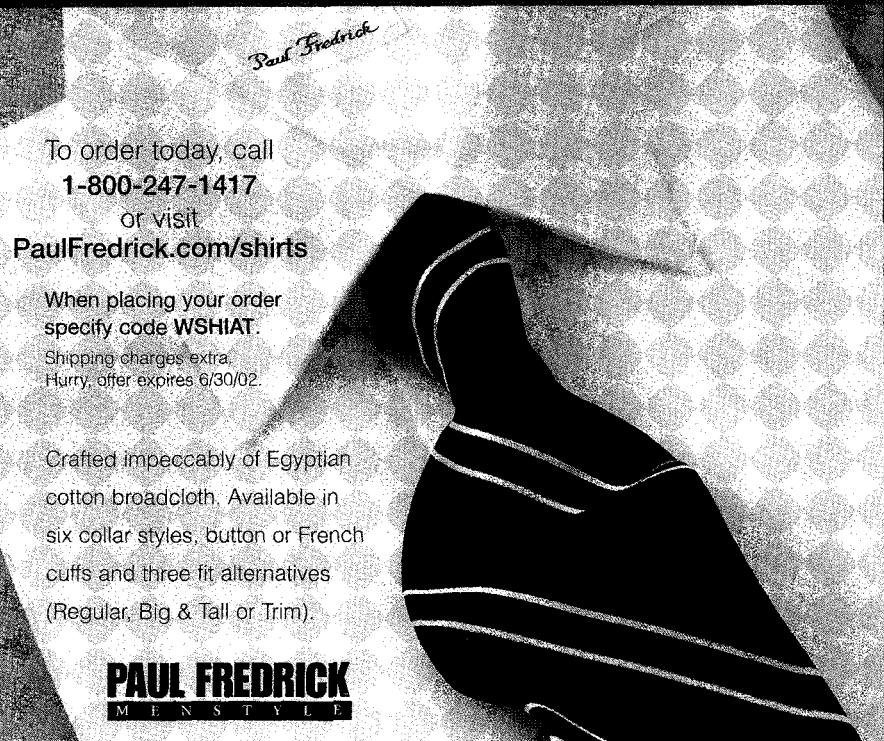
At one point, shuffling forward in a long line for It’s a Small World, looking over at some brave little figures with a view of nothing but grown-up legs, I found myself feeling a pang of sympathy for the children who numbered among my fellow visitors.

I want to proceed carefully here, because I know that many parents—even some who profess to deplore the place—report on how delighted their children have been by Disney World. I saw one little girl who was truly happy on the train ride (my favorite part too) around the Magic Kingdom, because she spotted a mechanical alligator in a swamp and she had been hoping to see an alligator. Her mother looked even happier. But I did not see many children who looked delighted for very long. I saw lots who looked dazed and not a few whom you might call wired. I heard many parents asking variations on the question Wasn’t that fun?, which in my experience you don’t have to ask a child if it was fun. One little boy, oblivious to all else around him, was, charmingly enough, entranced by a bird, an actual bird, on a bench. A trip here has become such a universal symbol of parental affection that it must be very hard for kids to know what to think. In any case, despite my conviction that the place is fascinating for adults, I can’t quite believe it is appropriate for children.

As you travel across the big interior of Disney World by bus, on Disney’s own system of divided highways that evoke the barren stretches of interstate America, you are apt to think of the

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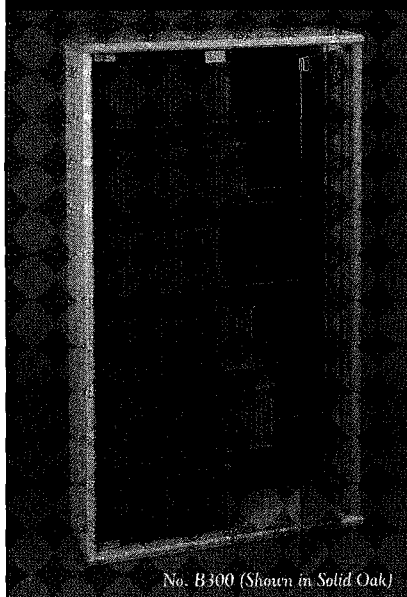
ways in which this place resembles the country that spawned it. It is like us in its love of broad sentiment and bright colors and violent movement—it has helped to teach us those things, hasn't it? It is like America in its celebration of democracy, or at least an aspect of it—democracy as leveler, enemy of pretension. And it is like America in that when, as is so often the case, any one place proves disappointing, you think the best must lie ahead, and so you move on.

But it's not America, as I could tell because of the way I felt when I crossed the border into the real thing. Would "free" be too strong a word?

Disney World aficionados debate whether it's better to choose a hotel inside or outside the park. We did both, moving halfway through our stay to a huge new place called Gaylord Palms, just over the line. Our new hotel did not represent a retreat into overnice refinement or restraint. It, too, is "themed," though here the theme is Florida. There's a four-and-a-half-acre atrium full of rocks and grottoes and waterfalls, some stone ruins meant to recall the city of St. Augustine, a white-columned wedding chapel, and a turquoise body of water of wading-pool depth, home to a sixty-foot ketch with sails set. We had a drink on the deck of the ketch, *Gaylord*. Still in the grip of that philosophical mode that Disney inspires, we had a brief discussion about how something qualifies as a boat (the stout, handsome *Gaylord* neither floats nor moves)—a conversation that would have been less diverting had it not been accompanied by an hors d'oeuvre of the absolute best fried calamari I have ever eaten or ever will.

I became devoted to Gaylord Palms, didn't want to leave. Its fantasy architecture would probably not exist without the inspiration of the Disney genius, and yet the feeling is utterly different. I started to launch an inquiry into why that might be, saying something like "In contrast to the utopian decontextualism of Disney ..." But I saw glazed eyes across the table and caught myself: "Waiter? I think we're ready to order." ■

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SPRING CARS

As the weather grows more seductive, so do the new-model automobiles

BY THOMAS HINE

.....

When the new Mercedes SL500 morphs from a hard-topped coupe into an open roadster, it is a moment of mechanical transcendence. Like an Olympic diver, the car's curving rear window seems to strike a pose in midair, and then it tucks itself gracefully into the roof unit and both disappear into the car's trunk.

This transformation is more than ingenious—it is a revelation of the car's design. You see that the line of the car's roof is not merely an aesthetic gesture; it's what allows this beautiful roof to disappear so efficiently. Here form follows function, and induces delight.

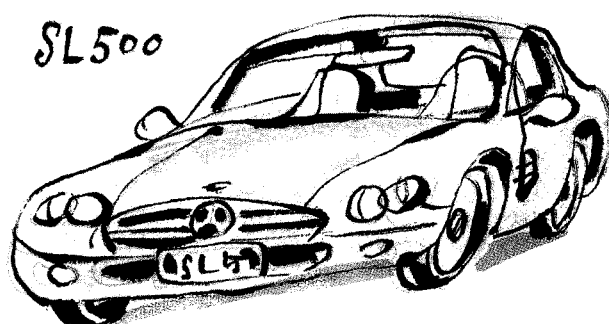
This muscular two-seater is the perfect car for spring. It's seductive and exciting, self-indulgent and impractical, fresh and evocative—a high-powered augmentation of animal spirits.

The SL500, at \$85,000, is a very expensive and wonderful toy. Before cars were everyday necessities for nearly everyone, they were toys for the rich. But don't all the rest of us want to have a touch of the toy in our autos? Cars introduced in the spring and the summer aren't necessarily better than those introduced at other times of year, but they do tend to be more fun. As the weather warms up in much of the United States, drivers are more likely to respond to the romance of the open road—even if most of their driving is on blocked freeways and clogged arterials.

"You want to sit in the car with the sun on your face," says Fred Suckow, the marketing manager for Nissan's forthcoming 350Z, which revives a fondly remembered but recently dormant line of sports cars. "It's not just how the car looks but how the clouds and landscape are reflected on the surface of the car and how you feel you

look in the driver's seat." Good-weather months are the best time, he says, for introducing good-time cars.

Typically, models that have become outmoded, bloated, or boring are re-invented and revived in the spring and summer. (Drivers might hope that the same magic can work on them, too.) Examples include the Volkswagen Beetle in 1998, the Ford Thunderbird last year, and the Mercedes SL and Nissan Z this



year. Sometimes, too, whole new concepts are introduced, as happened two springs ago with the Chrysler PT Cruiser—a minivan disguised as a 1930s getaway car. That season also brought us the Pontiac Aztek, a vehicle whose industrial, ugly-and-proud-of-it look failed to excite the youthful clientele for which it was intended. Not every spring car is a winner. But even the Aztek, with its built-in tent and configurable interior, was more than just another boring car.

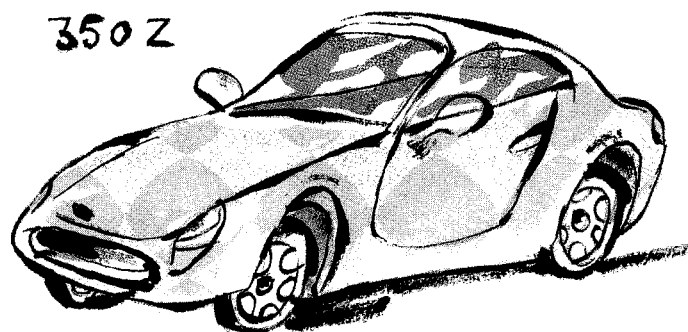
Perhaps the prototype for all spring introductions was the first Ford V-8, which came off the line in March of 1932. It brought unprecedented power and speed to the American mainstream. And it truly *was* a great getaway car: the bank robber Clyde Barrow said so in a fan letter to Henry Ford.

But the car that really defines the spring genre is another Ford:

the first Mustang, the one that is remembered as the 1964 1/2. In order to get the car maximum attention, Ford tied its introduction to the opening of the 1964 New York World's Fair, and the gimmick worked: the Mustang made the covers of both *Time* and *Newsweek*. Its arrival coincided with the graduation from high school of one of the earliest classes of Baby Boomers, and thus with the beginning of the phenomenon that we refer to as "the sixties." It cheered up a population that had been traumatized by President John F. Kennedy's assassination the previous November. More than a car, it was a full-fledged cultural phenomenon.

And yet the Mustang was little more than a gussied-up version of the Falcon, Ford's rather austere compact. During the early 1960s Detroit auto makers produced compact cars to compete with European imports, but most of the small cars were rather dull, for the most part because the companies still preferred to sell larger, more profitable models. The Mustang was a semi-compact that spoke of pleasure, not self-denial. Its styling was simple but sporty. And it proved to be a very profitable car, because the average buyer added about \$1,000 worth of options to its \$2,368 base price. It broke sales records because it was something new, and because people wanted it.

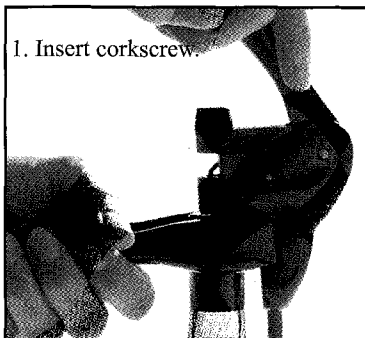
At the time of the Mustang's debut virtually all American cars were introduced in the autumn—the annual model change. In the 1920s Alfred Sloan, the mastermind of General Motors, pioneered this practice of updating the company's established brands; each of these had its own class association and design characteristics. Some



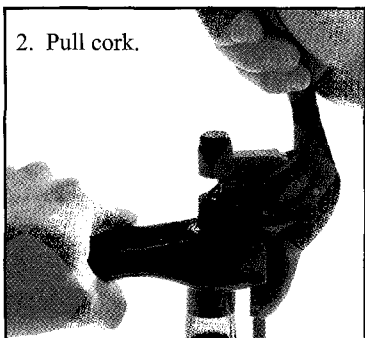
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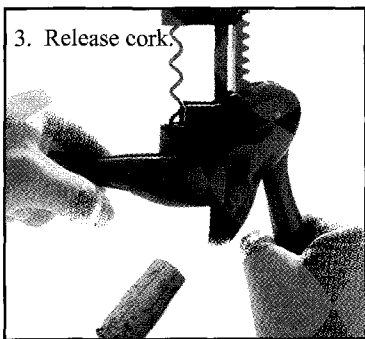
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people saw being a Buick or a Dodge driver as a lasting kind of identity, almost like being a Presbyterian or a Baptist. The designs were varied subtly from year to year, with major changes every three years.

The unveiling of the new models became a coast-to-coast event. Dealers would whitewash their windows so that the appearance of the new cars could be kept secret until the appointed day. Magazines offered sneak peeks, often with important details masked, and the entire culture—including children—participated in a ritual of anticipation.

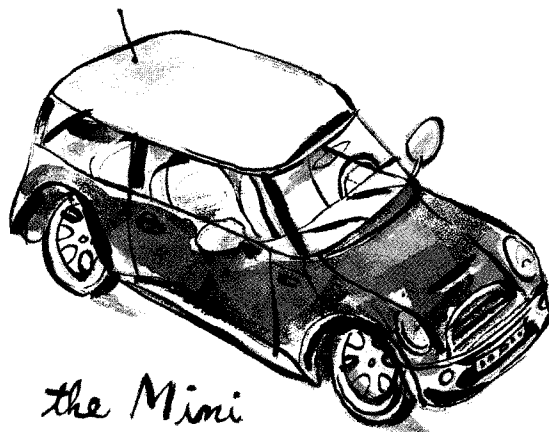
The purpose of the annual model change was not so much to get people excited about the new cars as to make them feel that their current cars looked old. It also accelerated the price depreciation of existing cars, which, curiously, helped to establish nearly universal car use, even among those with low incomes, by generating a supply of inexpensive used vehicles. Sloan was a genius at creating systems. Lee Iacocca, who was the Ford executive responsible for making the Mustang happen, bucked the system by focusing attention on a specific car—one that almost 420,000 customers wanted to buy in the first year.

Remnants of the annual model change persist, but nobody tries nowadays to keep new cars a secret. Prototypes are previewed in magazines and displayed at automobile shows. "Our buyers have known about this car for years," says Doug Worrell, the Mercedes manager who is overseeing the launch of the SL500. Mercedes's last substantial redesign of the SL series was introduced more than a decade ago, Worrell told me recently, and some people have bought essentially the same car twice. Mercedes dealers already have deposits for nearly all the 10,000 cars they expect to ship to the United States this year. But Worrell added quickly that prospective buyers shouldn't be discouraged from looking, because some of the people who put down deposits might not have quite

as much money as they once thought they would.

The major automobile shows—in Los Angeles and Detroit in January and in New York in March or April—have become crucial not merely for marketing new cars but also for testing ideas and gathering reactions from car enthusiasts and the press about which concepts should be pursued and how they should be refined for production. The PT Cruiser, for example, was exhibited first as part of a group of fantastic possibilities, then as a prototype, and finally as a production model.

The Nissan 350Z, one of this year's most anticipated cars, has also undergone a well-publicized evolution. It be-



gan almost as a guerrilla effort within the Japanese firm's California design offices. People there who believed that the company needed to resurrect the Z car—which in the early 1970s was the first Japanese car to capture American enthusiasm—took it upon themselves to create a concept car. It won enough support within the company to be exhibited at auto shows in 1999. Later the car was deemed stylistically too backward-looking, and last year a completely different design—whose sculpted body seems to flow like molten metal over big wheels—was shown. The production car, very similar to last year's prototype, has been displayed at this year's shows and will be at dealerships this summer, selling for about \$26,000.

"The marketing concept of the Z is lust—then love," Fred Suckow says of the long public introduction process. "We want to give people a chance to say 'I want that.'"

This spring's small crop of cars going from the auto shows to the showrooms has nothing that seeks to make the impact of the Mustang, or even of the PT Cruiser. All the models appeal to market niches—or, in the case of the Mercedes, slivers.

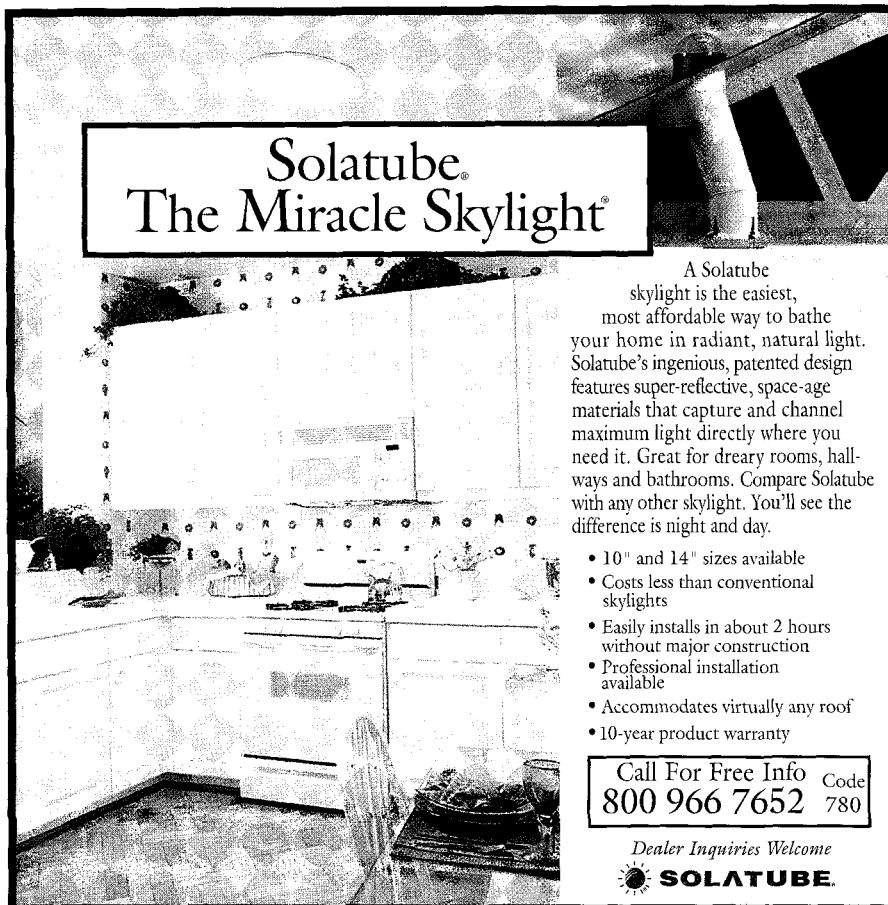
One, the new Honda Civic Hybrid sedan, which arrived in showrooms last month, follows the tradition of the Ford V-8 by putting an advanced engine in a mainstream car. Unlike Honda's earlier hybrid gasoline-electric model, the Insight, in which shielded rear wheels and obvious streamlining dramatized an experimental nature, the Civic Hybrid is virtually indistinguishable in design from other cars of its size. Its styling signals that 50-mpg cars may be on their way to being commonplace. The Hybrid will cost about \$20,000, and the company expects to sell 2,000 of them a month.

The new Mini Cooper, introduced in America in March, is, like the new Beetle before it, an upscale update of a beloved, affordable car. The original Mini, introduced in Britain in 1959, was the first mass-marketed front-wheel-drive car. It was shockingly small but lithe and lively, an icon of England in the swinging-London era (Paul McCartney had one). It was sold in very small quantities in the United States, during the 1960s, so its retro look conjures up memories in few Americans. The new Mini is manufactured in England by BMW Group, which expects to sell only about 20,000 of the cars in the United States, starting at about \$17,000 apiece.

The new Mini is almost two feet longer than the old, and with its leather seats, standard air-conditioning, and six airbags, it is a far cry from its minimalist predecessor. The car is so cute that it's almost smug. With a black or white top that seems to float above the window glass, it looks both novel and jaunty. And though some find the interior fussy in its detailing, the inside of the car's door and other features have a powerful, distinctive engineered look.

Then, this summer, comes that graceful, geometrically pure, up-to-date but perhaps timeless Nissan 350Z.

The weather's getting warmer. Life is short. I want that. **A**



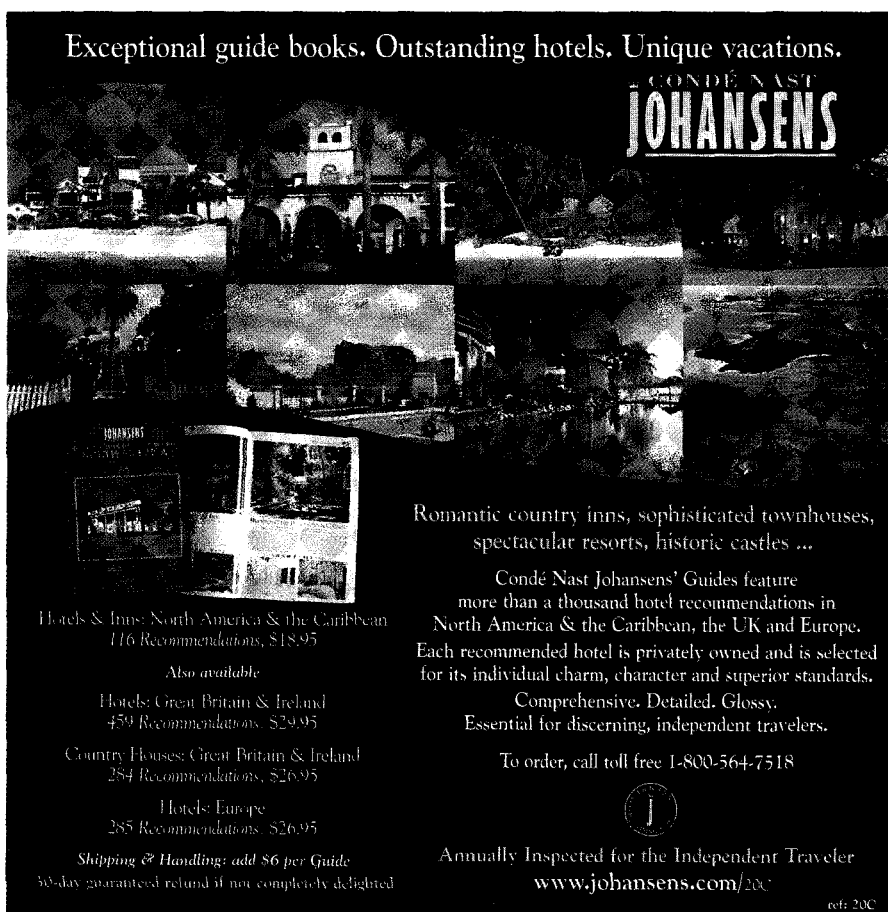
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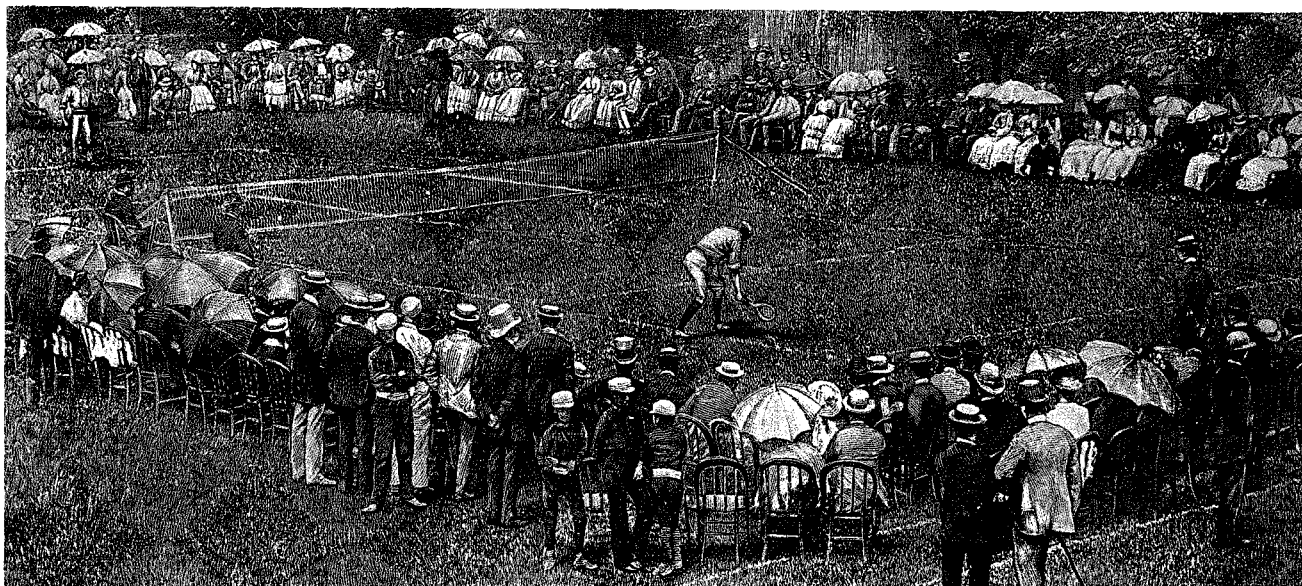
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SPORT

TENNIS ON THE GREEN

The game is still best when played as it was originally: on grass

BY MARSHALL JON FISHER

.....

Last July, at the grass-court Hall of Fame Championships, in Newport, Rhode Island, I watched Kenneth Carlsen, a towering, blond-ponytailed Dane, approach the net behind a backhand sidespin shot. The ball launched off his racket, spinning furiously at an oblique angle, and bounced low near the baseline. Carlsen's opponent, the compact South African Neville Godwin, could only look on helplessly as the ball skidded past him.

This took me back—it seemed years since I'd seen a sidespin approach shot. When I learned tennis, in the early 1970s, pros and amateurs alike knew that the proper way to get to the net was behind a slice, which produces backspin, causing the ball to bounce low and making a passing shot more difficult. The more advanced technique of sidespin was even better, because the ball would not only stay low but also angle away from the opponent. Today's pros, mostly "power baseliners," tend to approach the net, if at all, behind topspin shots—a strategy considered misguided as recently as twenty years ago. They assume, correctly, that the potency of topspin on a hard or clay court, along with the sheer force exerted by modern players with modern

rackets, is likely to set up an easy volley, if it doesn't win the point outright. But on grass, where the ball stays low and topspin is dampened, a slice or a sidespin is still the best way to get to the net. Carlsen relearned this maxim on the next point, when he apparently forgot what the playing surface was and came to the net on a topspin forehand; the ball bounced comfortably up to Godwin, who dispatched it down the line.

The Hall of Fame Championships reminded me why I much prefer grass courts, both as spectator and as player, to hard or clay courts. Because they cause the ball to bounce low, fast, and erratically, grass courts encourage a greater emphasis on net play—in which the ball is hit before it bounces—and thus make for a more diversified game. Instead of simply blasting the ball back and forth from the baseline, players must strive to get to the net themselves and to keep their opponents away from it. The result, unlike the action typically seen on other surfaces, is a smorgasbord of ground strokes, approach shots, lobs, and retrievals, with a variety of spins and angles.

The Hall of Fame tournament, held each July at the historic Newport Casino,

home to the International Tennis Hall of Fame, is a wonderful opportunity to glimpse this version of the game. Of course, even grass-court tennis today is a far cry from the game as it was played before big rackets came into use, in the 1980s. The players are too big and strong, the rackets too powerful, for the old rhythm of chip, lob, and retrieve ever to return.

Nonetheless, in the quaint confines of the Casino spectators get a feeling for the history of the game. At one point in the Carlsen-Godwin match a ripple of laughter in the crowd caused Carlsen to halt his service motion. He turned to see a rabbit grazing in the grass behind the baseline. A few linesmen and ball boys tried to corner the interloper and finally settled for chasing it under the bandstand. For a moment one could imagine it was 1901, not 2001.

In 1874 Mary Ewing Outerbridge, a Staten Island socialite, was vacationing in Bermuda when she saw some Englishmen knocking a white ball around an hourglass-shaped court on a lawn. A British army officer, Major Walter Wingfield, had invented *sphairistiké* (Greek for "playing at ball") the previous year, adapting it from court tennis (a more complex, indoor game that dates back to the Middle Ages) and "squash rackets." Outerbridge may or may not have been the first, but she brought some equipment for "lawn tennis" (as most people were calling it) back home, and soon

INTERNATIONAL TENNIS HALL OF FAME

members of the American leisure class were whacking balls around mansion grounds and in places like the Staten Island Cricket and Baseball Club.

In 1881 the United States National Lawn Tennis Association (a name later shortened to the United States Lawn Tennis Association) was formed to standardize rules and equipment, and the first U.S. singles championship for men was held at the brand-new Newport Casino. The club hosted the tournament until 1915, when play was moved to the West Side Tennis Club, in Forest Hills, New York. The women's championship, which began in 1887 at the Philadelphia Cricket Club, was moved to Forest Hills in 1921. In 1968, when all the major tournaments worldwide began to allow professionals to play, the combined U.S. championships became the U.S. Open.

As recently as 1974 three of the four major championships in the world were played on grass, and in the United States an entire grass-court season led up to the U.S. Open. But a tennis craze in the early 1970s brought the game to the masses, and from then on, grass-court tennis seemed less and less representative of the popular game. Only expensive country clubs could afford to build and maintain grass courts. The USLTA dropped its grassy *L* and switched the U.S. Open to clay courts at Forest Hills in 1975 and then to the hard courts of the National Tennis Center, in Queens, in 1978.

Now Wimbledon is the only important grass-court tournament. And although it remains probably the most prestigious tournament in the world, and is certainly my favorite to watch, it often seems even to me to be a quirky anachronism. Few of the players are comfortable on the grass, and frequently some one-dimensional monster server, such as last year's unseeded champion, Goran Ivanisevic, goes much further than he has any right to. More well-rounded serve-and-volleyers excel at Wimbledon too, but they are almost extinct. Pete Sampras may turn out to be the last great serve-and-volleyer in history. Jana Novotna, the last woman to serve and volley consistently, retired a couple of years ago.

Wimbledon gamely continues to

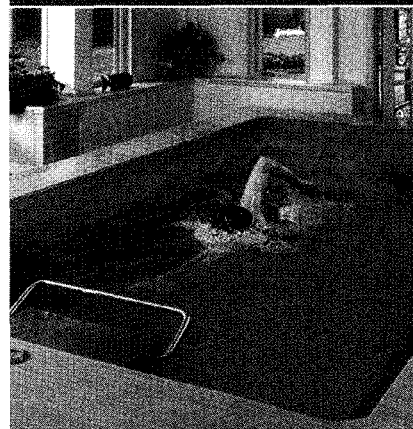
carry the grass-court torch and shows no sign yet of caving in and moving to a different surface, but one wonders how long it can hold out. The forces of global business, and the calls for bigger, more modern venues, are strong. At last year's U.S. Open, I couldn't help feeling that tennis had become too big for its own good. The new main stadium at the National Tennis Center is cavernous, and rock music blared between matches, along with announcements like "On behalf of Heineken, the official beer of the U.S. Open, enjoy the matches!" Such sponsorship certainly isn't helping the common fan. If you don't have the connections to get into one of the corporate boxes, you pay \$40 per ticket to sit in the upper-tier seats, appropriately painted sky-blue, and watch two tiny figures below knock a yellow blip back and forth. Better, for my money, to go to Newport, pay \$20, and sit close enough—in any seat—to appreciate the dimensions of a tennis court and how expertly the pros inhabit them.

The Newport Casino was the architect Stanford White's first major work, and today it offers visitors one of the world's finest examples of Victorian shingle-style architecture. Besides the grass courts, the Casino is home to the Newport Casino Croquet Club and also to America's second-oldest court-tennis court, still in use today. On a weekend you can usually find a few court-tennis devotees wielding archaic oblong-headed wooden rackets, knocking soft balls around an indoor court with a red cement floor.

In the main building is the International Tennis Hall of Fame & Museum, the best tennis museum in the world. You can find a nineteenth-century box holding a net, stakes, and rackets for "the new game of Lawn Tennis." Rackets from as far back as 1880 (including a 1925 metal racket with a wooden handle), a can of 1920s Wright & Dutton balls, and spiked tennis shoes (pros used spikes on grass until the early 1970s) are all there, along with videotapes of historic matches, shown on a 1950s Majestic television.

The Casino also offers the only public grass courts in the United States. For \$25 per person—less than the average golf-

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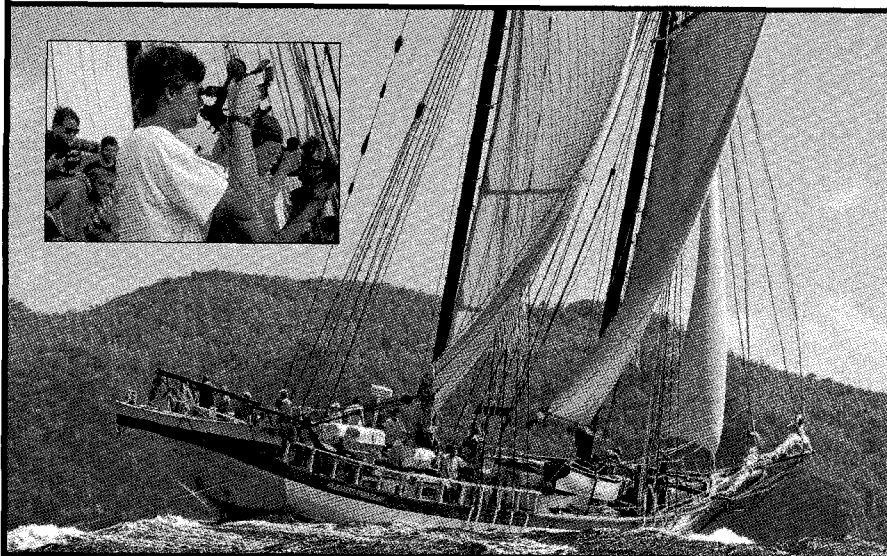
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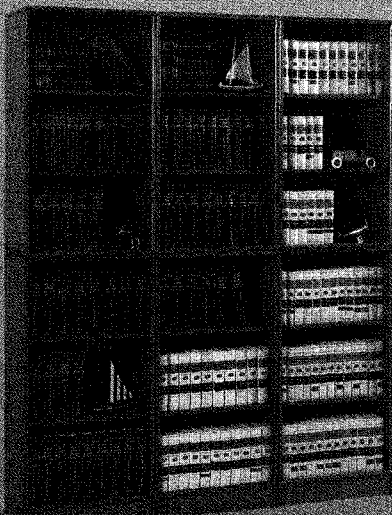
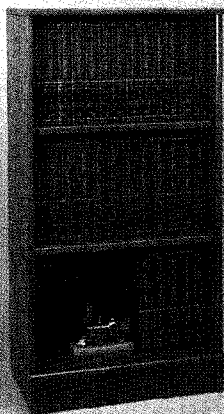
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green fee—anyone can experience the pleasures of grass-court tennis. Between semifinals at last year's tournament I played on a side court with a friend. Other than my daily summertime matches with my four-year-old son, in which we take our wooden rackets out onto "our grass court" (a lumpy, mole-aerated patch of American yard), I hadn't played on grass in six years. It had been too long.

The first thing to strike you is the feel underfoot. Almost any sport is most enjoyable played outdoors on a field. A grass tennis court, which is very much like a putting green, is the ultimate field; there's a thrill just to stepping onto the surface. The softness actually seems to heal aching knees and ankles. Once you begin to hit, the effect of grass on a bouncing tennis ball resurrects strategies and patterns of play from the past. Because the ball bounces low and fast, you need to meet it as soon after the bounce as possible. Better yet, get to the net and stay there: you won't have to worry about inconsistent and skidding bounces. The chipped approach, the underspin lob, and the serve-and-volley game will serve you better than topspin. On the court next to us four elderly gentlemen were playing doubles, undeterred by knees that probably wouldn't endure much hard-court play; they served and volleyed on every point to great effect. Maybe it's just that my game was always best suited for a vanishing surface I could never afford to play on. But there is an aesthetic satisfaction to playing tennis on turf that any tennis player might feel. (As a private pilot, I get a similar rush from landing on grass runways. The first time I did it, I turned to my instructor and crowed, "It's like playing at Forest Hills!")

I realize that grass-court tennis will never make a comeback—indeed, that it will eventually disappear from the pro circuit. And of course I approve of tennis's transformation thirty years ago from an upper-class diversion to an inclusive public sport. If tennis were still a game for mansions and exclusive country clubs, I'd be playing racketball. Yet there is occasion to admit that, as with all progress, something has been lost. For the tennis connoisseur, there's nothing like hitting a few out on the lawn. ▀

MANNERS
WELL MET

Introductions can be an especially hazardous corner of the social minefield

BY MARY KILLEN

.....

After the age of twenty-five people tend to spend less time cringing with embarrassment at the memory of their social gaffes. As time marches on, adults become less self-conscious and, ideally, less egocentric and more considerate of others. So the gaffes don't seem to happen so often. However, there is an area of the social minefield where the hazards only get worse as one goes along. This is the business of introducing people at parties.

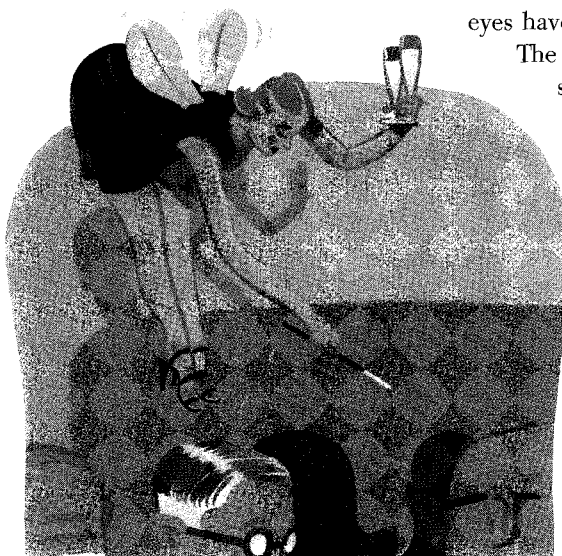
Things are relatively easy if the party is a small one—the host and hostess have time to brief people telephonically about what the “point” of the other guests is. And it is their duty to brief everyone. Doing so avoids any embarrassing spelling out of status while names are being exchanged—or code words to the effect of “He may not look very interesting, but he is our Attorney General.” A thorough briefing also affords the hosts the chance to add to the sum of human happiness by enabling chatter opportunities. “Oh, if only I had known that your mother used to be Jo Gordon Cumming before she married!” I heard a woman exclaim with dismay five minutes after said mother had left a party. “I used to know her brother William so well in Scotland.”

An inadequate supply of information can actually be risky, as a friend of mine learned at a house party on Barbados. Two other guests were also staying in the house, and as the three of them went up to change for dinner, one asked my friend, “Is anyone joining us tonight?” “Just the dullards who are staying at Sandy Lane, I think,” my friend casually replied. She knew that a couple currently on vacation at a nearby hotel were coming over, but because her hostess had failed to be specific, she assumed the worst. Imagine her discomfort when, descending the staircase an hour later, she witnessed the following scene. Couple One, the

other houseguests, standing in the hallway, hands outstretched to greet Couple Two coming in the door: “Hello. You must be the Dullards!”

For a large party involving dozens of guests it is clearly impossible to disseminate details in advance. And in the mayhem, with heads twizzling everywhere and all manner of human flotsam and jetsam bobbing by, forget about who does what—should you introduce them at all?

Here a horrific low point on my own learning curve springs to mind. The late Auberon Waugh, the journalist son of Evelyn, paused on his way



out of a launch party held in London for one of my books. Waugh was my hero, and I had never spoken to him before. I was ecstatic that he had even bothered to attend. As he opened his mouth to pronounce his opinion of my book, the front door also opened, and through it came Philip and Alexandra, a couple who were my neighbors in rural Wiltshire.

Naturally, I greeted them, but I did not introduce them to Waugh. Instead I used body language to shoo them

along and up the staircase. Waugh was on his way out, I reasoned, and they were on their way in; neither party would wish its progress to be interrupted. But in truth what I wished not to interrupt was the flow of praise that I imagined was about to issue from Waugh's mouth. Issue it did—though the wind was soon taken from my sails when another writer, to whom I reported what Waugh had said, remarked, “Oh, yes, he's always very good like that at book launches.”

Five years later Philip subtly dealt out the punishment I deserved. Waugh had just died, and his name came up at a dinner party. “I was a great fan of his,” Philip said. “But the only time I had a chance to meet him was at Mary's launch party.” The chatter moved on. Everyone else present assumed that Philip *had* met Waugh at my party, but I squirmed under his penetrating stare.

The rule is, forget self-interest, and always introduce people whose eyes have met and who are hovering.

The whole point of social life is to spread happiness. You need not forgo the precious conversational nugget you were about to receive from Person A when Person B comes along. Just grasp A's left hand during the introductions, so that he cannot get away until he has delivered it.

Of course, it is different if, for example, you are talking to Person A and Person B is pushing past with two glasses of champagne in his hands, bound for the farthest corner of the room. At that point a nod or a wave accompanied by a broad smile will do. Incidentally, picking up two glasses of champagne, rather than one, can be a very useful tactic whenever you're at a party where, frankly, you know too many people. It enables you to push confidently through the crowd as though en route to deliver the second glass to someone, and thereby to excuse yourself if threatened with an introduction to one of those dreaded dullards. ▀

COLVIN RUN TAVERN*Restaurants worth building a trip around*

BY CORBY KUMMER

.....

But that's so far," Washington friends said when I recently proposed going to the new Colvin Run Tavern, in Tysons Corner, Virginia. Tysons Corner isn't far, of course: it's a suburb of Washington, D.C., and a half hour's drive west of the Mall. But going there feels like getting far out of the city. The drive passes near some of Virginia's loveliest hunt country, and then a sudden concentration of shopping malls, office buildings, and hotels rises in the distance.

Colvin Run is in the most elegant group of shops, directly between Tiffany and Gucci. It's elegant too, but not glossy. It's also firmly tied to the region, unlike the chain stores and chain restaurants around it. The name comes from a nearby gristmill that ground and sold cornmeal and flour until the 1930s (the mill has been restored and is open for tours), and the food is full of mid-Atlantic and southern influences.

I persuaded my friends to make the drive because I'm a longtime admirer of Bob Kinkead, the owner and chef, and this is his first new venture since he opened his very popular downtown restaurant, Kinkead's, more than ten years ago. Kinkead's has long been my favorite place in Washington to find local ingredients, particularly fish and seafood, reliably prepared and served in very comfortable surroundings. Kinkead is one of the country's leading upholders of what in the 1980s became known as New American cuisine, incorporating French techniques and regional American ingredients. (This school began with Larry Forgione's An American Place, in New York City; its current redoubts include Charlie Palmer's Aureole, also in New York, and Bradley Ogden's Lark Creek Inn, in Larkspur, California.) It's a big, masculine style of cooking, with several deep-flavored, often contrasting elements in

a single dish, and rich sauces. Kinkead has stayed at the top of the Washington list because he pays close attention to a distinctly American style of service that arose at the same time the cuisine did—friendly and knowledgeable without being familiar or pretentious. He also put good live music in the downstairs bar at Kinkead's, which is an excellent place for a solo supper.

Although I visited Colvin Run just five months after it opened, it had the feel of a smooth-running, long-established operation.

The customers, not at all stereotypically suburban in appearance, looked like a mixture of downtown lawyers, businesspeople, and policymakers; survivors of the dot-com boom, which originally lured the expensive chain steakhouses that until recently were the closest Tysons Corner came to haute cuisine; and intriguing cosmopolitan types who could animate a spy novel. The service at Colvin Run was nearly as polished as that at Kinkead's.

Each of the four, themed rooms, whose names evoke those of hotel conference rooms (Shenandoah, Charleston, Nantucket, Camden), is plush and comfortable in an unforced way. I was drawn to the lively warmth of the Shenandoah, with its big stone hearth, but my friends preferred the trim and spare Nantucket, for the calm that made conversation easy. (Unfortunately, it offers views of shoes, not sandals on the beach.)

Where Kinkead's specializes in fish, Colvin Run places equal emphasis on meats, in part, Bob Kinkead has said, to match and improve on all the nearby steakhouses. This emphasis works to the advantage of anyone who hasn't had a superior prime rib in a long time, or a superior leg of lamb. The night I visited, lamb was the featured joint on the "carving cart," a silver-domed and

dark-wood rolling cart out of a men's club of yore. The lamb was said to be marinated in North African spices, but they were mild, and more apparent in the fresh and moist timbale of couscous with pine nuts and currants that came on the plate. The meat was superb—a very light pink with brown, not black, ends, firm but not tough, in taste the essence of lamb. Loin of pork was not so definitive, but the sauce was a good idea done well, flavored with bourbon and "burnt ends" of roast pork.

The side dishes were so good that I wished for triple helpings: ideally balanced sweet-and-sour red cabbage, and trembling corn pudding, a custard of delicate flavor and such technical skill that I wanted to alert my favorite writers on southern food to tell them I had found an exemplar of what they had made me hope one day to taste. Fish was a bit less noteworthy overall than the several fish dishes I tried at a recent lunch at Kinkead's, where some of the dishes might have been oversauced and overgarnished, but the fish was of impeccable quality, and the signature crab cakes were meaty and crisped as always (Colvin Run serves them at lunch).

Mostly I was impressed by the confidence and flair of the kitchen, which that night was supervised by Kinkead himself; he appeared during dessert to greet diners in other rooms. He will be dividing his time between the two restaurants, and has named his former chef de cuisine, Jeff Gaetjen, to be chef at Colvin Run. Each dish at dinner had a shine, an edge, as if the chef had been reinvigorated by some new competition he'd set for himself. The excitement was evident in small things: the way the skin of pan-roasted rockfish had been seared; the perfect pale-green color and firm-soft texture of the hand-trimmed artichoke heart set beside a small disk of deep-maroon tuna tartare, which came as a giveaway at the beginning of the meal. That intense kitchen energy was more than worth the trip from Washington. ▀

Colvin Run Tavern, 8045 Leesburg Pike, Tysons Corner, Virginia, 703-759-2771. Dinner 5:30–9:30 Monday through Thursday, until 10:30 Friday and Saturday, and 5:00–9:00 Sunday. Reservations and major credit cards accepted.

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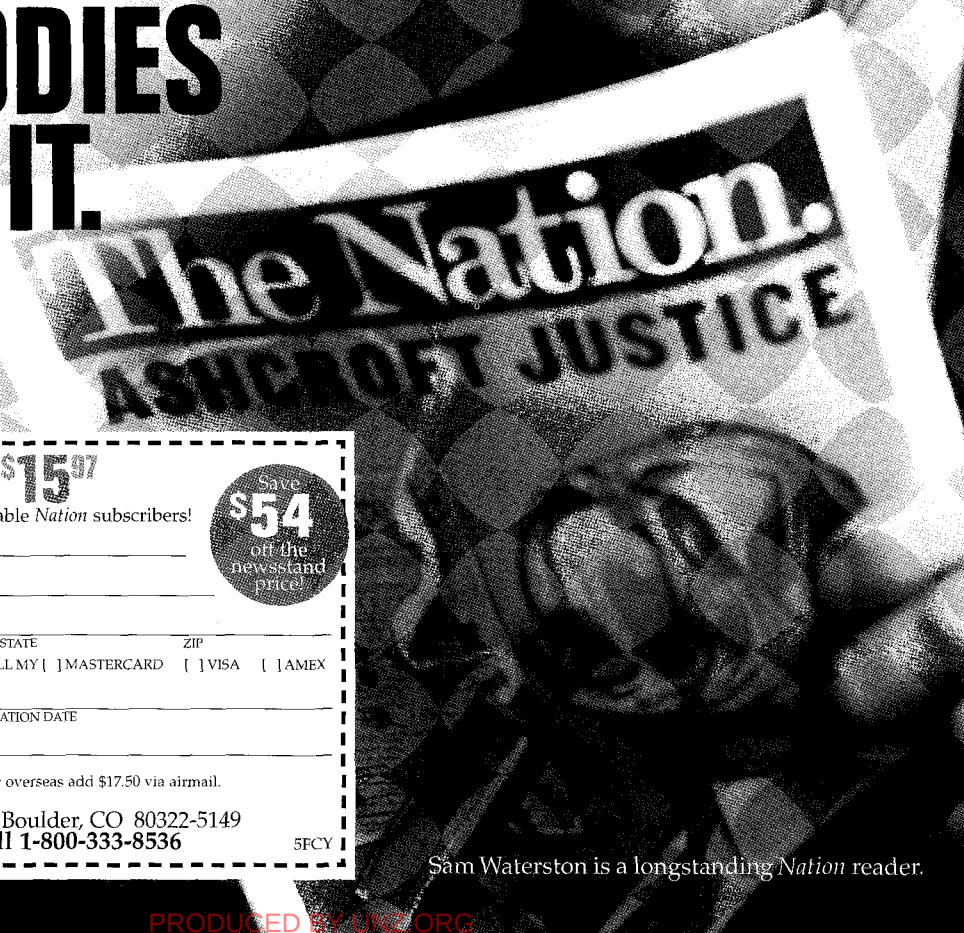
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BOOKS & CRITICS

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DICKENS OUR CONTEMPORARY

In her new biography Jane Smiley argues that Dickens may have been "the first true celebrity"

BY DAVID LODGE

.....

The Penguin Lives series consists of short critical biographies of world-famous literary, intellectual, and political figures, commissioned from authors who are distinguished in their own right but not recognized "experts" on the subject in question. For example: Edmund White on Marcel Proust, Edna O'Brien on James Joyce, Mary Gordon on Joan of Arc. The choice of biographer is not obvious—it may even be at first glance surprising—but it is intriguing, and based on some perceived affinity of temperament, vision, or cultural background between author and subject. The hope, obviously, is that a kind of chemical reaction between biographer and biographee will spark fresh illuminations of subjects who have already been exhaustively studied and written about.

In that respect few subjects offer a tougher challenge than Charles Dickens, with whom the novelist Jane Smiley has been paired. As she acknowledges at the outset of her book, his is "possibly the most amply documented literary sensibility in history." This is partly because he is arguably second only to Shakespeare in the pantheon of English writers, and so has attracted almost as much critical and scholarly attention; but whereas, for historical reasons, comparatively few facts are known about Shakespeare, placing severe constraints on the biographical approach to his work, Dickens lived at the beginning of the Industrial

Age, when information itself became industrialized—routinely recorded, reproduced, and (even when hidden) preserved on a vast scale for subsequent generations to discover. As Smiley ob-

CHARLES DICKENS

by Jane Smiley

Lipper/Viking
224 pages, \$19.95

serves, we know more about Dickens's life, especially his early life, than his own family did, because he concealed from them facts of which he was ashamed or that he found distressing to contemplate, but that were disinterred posthumously. Nevertheless, as Smiley also comments, there remains a paradoxical equivalence between Shakespeare and Dickens: for all the mass of information we have about the latter, the true nature of his character and genius is almost as mysterious as that of the former.

Although new facts are still being discovered about Dickens, it seems unlikely that any such discovery will fundamentally alter our view of his character and work. The only significant originality attainable by the biographer or critic, and the only excuse for adding to the mountain of secondary literature already heaped on his reputation, is in interpretation of the given facts. Smiley, however, explicitly dissociates herself from those critics and biographers who claim to understand an author and his work better than he did himself. "Writing is an act of artistic and moral agency," she asserts firmly, "where choices are made that the author understands, full of implications and revelations that the author also understands." If this atti-

tude somewhat underestimates the contribution of a writer's unconscious to the creative process, it also enables Smiley to make us see Dickens's immense creative achievement afresh without deploying any of the theoretical apparatus and intimidating jargon of modern academic criticism, and without engaging in point-scoring debate with other commentators.

For biographical data Smiley seems to rely mainly on Peter Ackroyd's monumental life. She is clearly a devoted and enthusiastic reader of Dickens's fiction, and this is a necessary but not a sufficient qualification for writing a new critical biography of him. She has found something new and interesting to say primarily by drawing on her own experience of what it is like to write and publish novels. Some of her own—*Moo*, for example—have a Dickensian abundance of characters, and delight in making narrative connections between apparently unrelated persons; like Dickens's, her novels combine humor and wit with a serious treatment of serious subjects. But one should not exaggerate these purely formal resemblances. What distinguishes Smiley's critical biography is her ability to identify *professionally* with Dickens. The book's foundation is her acute perception that Dickens was "a true celebrity (maybe the first true celebrity in the modern sense)"—and the first writer, therefore, to feel the intense pressure of being simultaneously an artist and an object of unremitting public interest and adulation. In this and in other, related respects his life and work prefigured much in our own literary culture. If Smiley's book had a title other than the bare name of its subject, it might be (by analogy with the late Jan Kott's influential study of Shakespeare, though for very different reasons) *Dickens Our Contemporary*.



Celebrity is not the same thing as fame. There were English writers before Dickens who were famous in their own lifetimes—Samuel Richardson, Dr. Johnson, Lord Byron, for example. But they did not cultivate or exploit their fame, and it didn't take over their entire lives, as celebrity always threatens to do. Celebrity entails a certain collaboration and complicity on the part of the subject. It can bring great material rewards and personal satisfactions, but at a cost: the transformation of one's "self" into a kind of commodity. It requires conditions that did not exist before the Industrial Revolution hit its stride: fast and flexible means of production, transportation, and communication, which circulate the work widely and bring the author into actual or virtual contact with his or her audience.

The two greatest novelists of the generation before Dickens—Jane Austen and Walter Scott—both published their novels anonymously: "By the Author of *Waverley*" and "By the Author of *Pride and Prejudice Etc. Etc.*" Scott achieved fame (and a baronetcy) as a poet, but he did not avow authorship of his novels until relatively late in his career. Jane Austen's professional identity was known only to a small circle of family and friends until after her death. How unthinkable such self-effacement seems in our personality-obsessed, publicity-conscious age! Even Dickens began by writing under a pseudonym, but he discarded it fairly quickly. It is Dickens who stands symbolically on the threshold of the modern literary era, and whose career embodies the difference between being famous and being a celebrity. The very word "celebrity" as a concrete noun, applied to persons, entered the language only in the mid nineteenth century. The first citation in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is dated 1849—the year Dickens published *David Copperfield* and stood unchallenged as the greatest and most popular writer of his age.

Dickens not only wrote novels that became classics of English literature in his lifetime; he transformed the methods of publishing fiction and thus changed the possibilities of authorship for his contemporaries and his successors. He

was, as Smiley reminds us, a brilliant entrepreneur as well as an artist, driven by painful memories of what it was like to be poor and by the excitement of making money through his own efforts. The story of his first, meteoric success is worth recalling. In his early twenties, without private wealth or a conventional gentleman's education behind him, he was eking out a living as a parliamentary reporter and freelance journalist. Some "sketches" of contemporary life among the lower classes, published under the nom de plume "Boz," attracted enough attention to win him a commission that another writer might have treated as hackwork: providing narrative copy to accompany the monthly publication of a series of sporting prints by a popular artist of the day, Robert Seymour. Dickens seized the opportunity and created *The Pickwick Papers*. Very soon the artist found himself playing a subordinate role, obliged to take instructions from the courteous but determined young writer. The unfortunate and mentally unstable Seymour apparently couldn't bear the humiliation, and blew his brains out while working on the second number. He was replaced by Hablot Knight Browne ("Phiz"), and sales of *The Pickwick Papers*, which had been sluggish at first, suddenly took off on the wings of Dickens's comic genius. Only about 400 copies of the first issue had been published. Before the end the print run was 40,000.

The success of the serial publication of *Pickwick* encouraged Dickens to use the same or similar methods for his subsequent novels, from *Oliver Twist* onward, before issuing them in volume form. He launched a miscellany called *Master Humphrey's Clock*, in which *The Old Curiosity Shop* and *Barnaby Rudge* were published in weekly installments. Later he founded a magazine, *Household Words*, which provided a platform for weekly serialization of his own and other novelists' work. Publication in parts and magazine serialization, pioneered by Dickens, became the standard form for the initial publication of novels in the Victorian age, and it is one reason why he and other writers of high literary quality, such as William Makepeace Thackeray, George Eliot,

and Elizabeth Gaskell, commanded a vast audience. Smiley is not the first to draw a parallel with modern television drama. The serialized Victorian novel was something between a mini-series and a soap opera, its installments often appearing over a period of more than a year. The audience absorbed the story and became familiar with the characters in a rhythm almost as slow as that of their own lives. And because Dickens and some of his contemporaries started publishing their novels serially before they had finished writing them, feedback from the audience could affect the development of the story and the roles of the characters. For example, Dickens sent young Martin Chuzzlewit to America in an effort to revive flagging sales, and wrote more and more scenes for Mrs. Camp as she proved more and more popular with his readers.

Toward the end of the century this solidarity between literary novelists

Woolf, resigned themselves, with good or ill grace, to addressing a small but discriminating readership, and were often exiles from their own society in either a literal or a metaphorical sense. Exponents of the traditional, page-turning novel with a well-made plot and an unproblematic rendering of social reality, such as Arnold Bennett, John Galsworthy, Compton Mackenzie, and J. B. Priestley, were the commercially successful literary "celebrities," interviewed in, discussed by, and contributing to the mass media. Toward the end of the twentieth century, however, this divide became less evident—indeed, almost invisible. For a variety of reasons, some cultural, some socio-economic, literary fiction became more reader-friendly and an object of exploitative interest to the mass media and big business. The "literary best seller" (that is, an ambitious and innovative book that also sells in vast numbers, like Salman Rushdie's *Mid-*

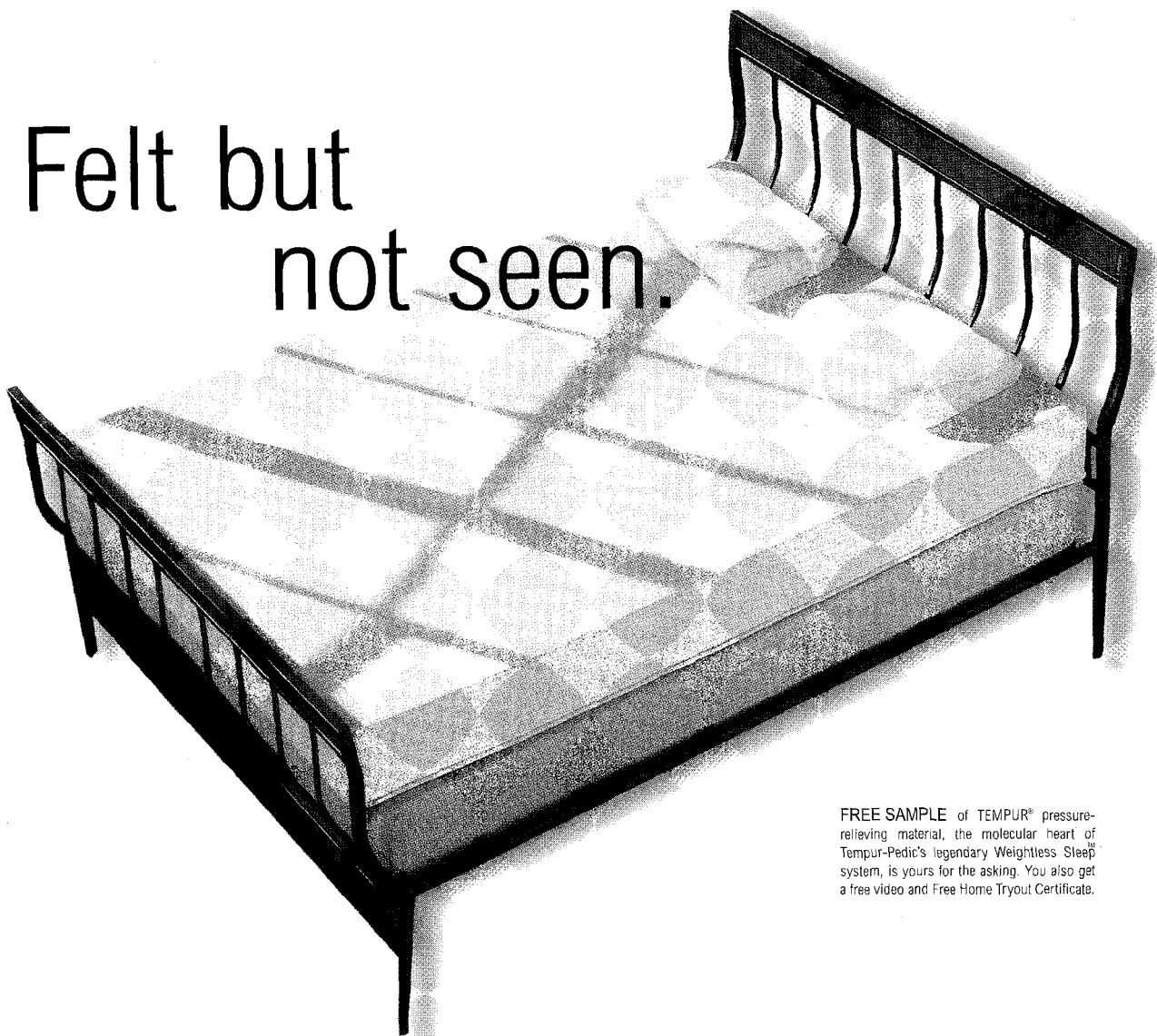
Dickens embodies the difference between fame and celebrity. The current sense of the word "celebrity" entered the language only in the mid 1800s, when Dickens was the most popular writer of his age.

and the reading public began to disintegrate. Some writers—Thomas Hardy was a notable example—fell afoul of the prudish constraints imposed by magazine editors on the representation of sexuality. Others, like Henry James, found that the pursuit of formal beauty and psychological subtlety in their fiction made it less marketable. It is recorded that in 1900 the business manager of this magazine, which had serialized several of James's novels, "begged the editor ... 'with actual tears in his eyes' not to print another 'sinker' by James lest the *Atlantic* be thought 'a "high-brow" periodical.'" The business manager's plea was symptomatic and prophetic. In the modern period a split developed between cutting-edge literary fiction and middlebrow entertainment fiction. Practitioners of the former, such as James, Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, Ford Madox Ford, Dorothy Richardson, and Virginia

night's Children or Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* or Toni Morrison's *Beloved*), which would have seemed a contradiction in terms in the period of high modernism, once again became an achievable goal, as it had been in Dickens's era. The authors of such books are celebrities. Even the modestly successful literary novelist today is expected to help with the marketing of his or her work—by giving interviews, appearing on TV and radio, taking part in public readings, book-signings, and other meet-the-author events—and thus experiences, in a pale form, the phenomenon of author-as-celebrity that Dickens's career inaugurated, and the stresses and contradictions that go with it.

Dickens was, of course, "the Inimitable"—it was an epithet he enjoyed invoking himself—and he experienced both the gratifications and the penalties of celebrity on a heroic scale. The success of his early novels was phenomenal.

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By the age of thirty, Smiley observes, he was already the most famous writer of his day. "He had achieved not simply literary success, but something else, a separate status. His voice and his vision had become *beloved*; as Ackroyd puts it, he was 'public property.'" A letter to his friend and confidant John Forster about a public dinner given for him in Edinburgh in June of 1841 shows Dickens's awareness that there was something unprecedented about the position he had attained in English life: "The tone of his letter was exultant, pleased, and, at least to some degree, amazed," Smiley writes. "He seems to have been especially struck by the fact that he was so young and the men who came to celebrate him were old and established."

The exceptional popularity of his books extended to the New World. The story of the crowds waiting on the quays in New York for the ship carrying the latest installment of *The Old Curiosity Shop* to dock, calling out to the passengers and crew, "Is Little Nell dead?" is well known. But it was on his first visit to America, in 1842, not long after that triumphal dinner in Edinburgh, that Dickens discovered celebrity could be a curse as well as a blessing. He was lionized, fêted, and royally entertained, and at first he was delighted by all the attention. But soon the relentless glare of publicity, the intrusiveness of American journalists, and the impossibility of securing any peace and privacy for himself and his wife, Catherine (who had reluctantly accompanied him), became too much. "We can recognize it," says Smiley, the seasoned modern pro, "as a nightmare book tour, the author and his wife unprotected by publicists or any sort of previous experience." Dickens became uneasy, irritable, and openly critical of the host country. His bitter complaints about American publishers' pirating of his work, however justified they may now appear to us, were not well received. The euphoria of his initial reception turned to sourness, with disillusionment on both sides. Smiley comments shrewdly,

The new machinery of capitalistic publishing had carried his work far and wide, bringing a single man, a single voice, into a personal relationship with

huge numbers of people whom he had never met, and yet who felt intimate with him, because the novel is, above all, an intense experience of prolonged intimacy with another consciousness. But both the author and the readers had misread the relationship.

The same kind of misreading would in due course occur in England; but there, because of the stratified class system and more complex code of manners, the line between public and private life was still implicitly understood and respected. American society in the 1840s, brash and democratic, prefigured our Age of Publicity, in which anyone in public life is deemed to be a legitimate object of media attention, all the time. Politicians and film stars have learned to cope with this by performing their private lives in public while actually living them in secret, in the company of other celebs, protected by walls and security guards. But the profession-

making simplistic inferences about the author from his work. But the omniscient authorial voice favored by Dickens and most other Victorian novelists encouraged their readers to feel that the text they held in their hands was a direct line to a real human being; that the "Charles Dickens" whose name appeared on the title page of the novel was identical with the man who actually wrote the book. But the authorial persona is a rhetorical construction, a "second self," as the Chicago critic Wayne Booth called it. When the real author encounters real readers, the experience can be uncomfortable on both sides.

It is important to recognize, however, that Dickens's celebrity was not forced upon him. He invited it and, most of the time, enjoyed it. It satisfied an element in his character that delighted in public performance and role-playing. Smiley rightly emphasizes his

Public readings occupied Dickens more and more in the last decade of his life, undoubtedly hastening his death. A modern analogy for these readings is the triumphal tour of an aging, still charismatic pop star.

al lives of politicians and film stars do not necessarily entail the kind of self-disclosure that seems inherent in writing novels. As Smiley emphasizes, the novel is, among all the literary genres and artistic forms, peculiarly focused on consciousness, on the representation of the thoughts and feelings that most of us, most of the time, keep to ourselves: "The intimacy [Dickens's readers] felt through the work came from the natural power of the novel to cross the boundaries of appearance and reveal the inner life." That is to say, not only the inner lives of the characters but also the inner life of the man who created them. "Authors live in a dialogue with their work, and their work is their inner life made concrete," she writes. Modern novelists have developed various defenses and disguises—limited point of view, impersonal or unreliable narrators, metafictional tricks of all kinds—to deter readers from

love of the theater and his enthusiasm for acting. While writing *Pickwick*, he sometimes went to the theater every night of the week. As a young man, he seriously considered becoming a professional actor, and only indisposition prevented him from attending an audition that might have set him on a different career path. As it was, he somehow found time, amid all his writing and editing and business and philanthropic enterprises and domestic responsibilities, to produce and act in elaborate amateur theatricals that were often performed in public theaters before large audiences. A painting by a Royal Academician portrays him in magnificent costume as Bobadill, in Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour*, which Dickens also directed. This fascination—one might almost call it an obsession—with the theater left its mark on Dickens's novels, not only where they deal directly with the stage,

such as the Crummles episodes in *Nicholas Nickleby* and Wopsle's performance as Hamlet in *Great Expectations*, but in his distinctive way of creating characters and making them speak and constructing scenes of interaction between them. Ackroyd noted Dickens's remark, as reported by a friend, that he "believed he had more talent for the drama than for literature, as he certainly had more delight in acting than in any other work whatever." It seems obvious that if the Victorian theater had been as receptive to the literary imagination as the Elizabethan was, Dickens would have been a playwright, like Shakespeare, rather than a novelist; but the Victorian theater was in fact trivial and philistine, reducing tragedy to melodrama and comedy to farce. Indeed, even its melodrama frequently degenerated into unintentional farce, as Dickens recognized, giving a parodic example in *Nicholas Nickleby*.

The plot was most interesting. It belonged to no particular age, people, or country, and was perhaps the more delightful on that account, as nobody's previous information could afford the remotest glimmering of what would ever come of it. An outlaw had been very successful in doing something somewhere, and came home in triumph, to the sound of shouts and fiddles, to greet his wife—a lady of masculine mind, who talked a good deal about her father's bones, which it seemed were unburied, though whether from a peculiar taste on the part of the old gentleman himself, or the reprehensible neglect of his relations, did not appear. This outlaw's wife was somehow or other mixed up with a patriarch, living in a castle a long way off, and this patriarch was the father of several of the characters, but he didn't exactly know which, and was uncertain whether he had brought up the right ones in his castle, or the wrong ones, but rather inclined to the latter opinion, and, being uneasy, relieved his mind with a banquet, during which solemnity somebody in a cloak said, "Beware!" which somebody was known by nobody (except the audience) to be the outlaw himself, who had come there for reasons unexplained, but possibly with an eye to the spoons.

The sublimely funny passage from which this is extracted shows Dickens

to have been well aware of the absurdity of much of the popular drama of his day, but he, too, drew directly on melodramatic diction and gesture at the emotional climaxes of his stories, and this can create problems for modern readers. Dickens did not mean us to smile when, in the same novel, the young hero prevents the tyrant schoolmaster Squeers from beating the boy Smike in this kind of language: "Wretch," rejoined Nicholas, fiercely, "touch him at your peril! I will not stand by and see it done; my blood is up, and I have the strength of ten such men as you. Look to yourself, for by Heaven I will not spare you, if you drive me on."

In the winter of 1856–1857 Dickens collaborated with his friend and fellow novelist Wilkie Collins on a melodrama titled *The Frozen Deep*. The story was loosely based on the British Arctic expedition of 1845 to find the Northwest Passage, in the course of which all the participants lost their lives. Collins wrote the script, but Dickens worked on it too, and took the role of the leader of the expedition, Richard Wardour. Collins had represented him as the villain of the piece, but Dickens rewrote the part, making him into a more complex character who redeems himself by a final act of self-sacrifice. This episode inspired the character of Sydney Carton ("It is a far, far better thing that I do . . .") in Dickens's next novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*; but the play was to have other, more personal consequences for Dickens. In portraying Wardour as a man "perpetually seeking and never finding true affection," Dickens was acting out (in the psychoanalytical sense) his own increasing dissatisfaction with his marriage, and the play was eventually to bring into his life a woman who would apparently satisfy that longing.

By all accounts *The Frozen Deep* is typical of its period, a creakily contrived vehicle for extravagant displays of emotion and overblown rhetoric. It was first performed privately at Dickens's London home, as a Twelfth Night entertainment for friends, with Dickens's sister-in-law Georgina and two of his daughters in the cast. But an indication of the importance Dickens at-

tached to this production is that he invited newspaper reviewers to watch it. They, and the rest of the audience, were stunned by the intensity of Dickens's performance. Later that year he arranged public performances of the play in Manchester, to raise money for a deceased friend's family. Realizing that his own womenfolk would not be able to hold the stage in a large auditorium, he hired a family of professional actors: Frances Ternan, a widow, and her three daughters, Fanny, Maria, and Ellen ("Nelly"). The first night was a sensation. Dickens reported to a friend, "It was a good thing to have a couple of thousand people all rigid and frozen together in the palm of one's hand . . . and to see the hardened Carpenters at the sides crying and trembling at it." Maria Ternan, an experienced actress, could not restrain real tears as she cradled the dying Wardour in her arms at the climax of the piece.

Obviously something very extraordinary was happening in these performances. Like a great professional actor, Dickens was transmuting dramatic base metal into gold, but he was doing so by drawing deeply on all kinds of conflicted personal emotion. The frozen deep of his own psyche was melted, and the experience was a kind of therapy. He wrote to Collins subsequently, "I have never known a moment's peace or content since the last night of *The Frozen Deep*." But perhaps that remark also reflected his growing attachment to Nelly Ternan and the trouble it caused in his domestic life. As he began to see more and more of her, Dickens also began proceedings to obtain a legal separation from Catherine, but he indignantly denied that there was any connection between these developments, and insisted, in rather embarrassing and undignified public pronouncements, that his friendship with an unnamed "young lady" was entirely proper and her character irreproachable. In due course he set up Nelly and her mother (who conferred a kind of respectability on the arrangement) in various houses in England and France, and visited them discreetly; but whether she was actually his mistress and, as was rumored, bore him

a child, no one has been able to ascertain, including Claire Tomalin, who has written the definitive study of the relationship. Dickens had by this time learned to protect his private life with great skill, and Nelly, who lived to the age of seventy-five, kept the facts of their relationship to herself.

Dickens's attitude to love, marriage, and sexuality, in his life and in his work, is a complex and puzzling subject. Most of his biographers have been baffled by his choice of Catherine Hogarth as a wife. His letters to her during their courtship give no clue, conveying little sense of real passion. She was rather dull, and not particularly good-looking. Genuinely as she tried, she was quite incapable of responding adequately to her husband's intelligence, wit, imagination, and energy. What did he see in her? The simplest explanation is that he was a virile but idealistic young man who wished urgently to satisfy his sexual drive in a morally and socially approved fashion, and she was the first woman to accept him. He had courted the love of his youth, Maria Beadnell, for three frustrating years, only to be rejected by her and her family because of his uncertain prospects. When he met Catherine, these were improving, and he married her on the strength of the *Pickwick* commission. He claimed later that he realized after only two years that the marriage had been a mistake, yet he went on sleeping with Catherine, and impregnating her, until—after twenty-one years, ten children, and several miscarriages—he told her maid to erect a partition in their bedroom so that they could sleep apart. That was in 1857, the year he met Nelly Ternan.

The regular pregnancies imply a certain frequency of intercourse, but Dickens plainly stopped desiring Catherine fairly early in the marriage, complaining that she had grown fat and clumsy and chronically unwell. It seems unlikely that she invited or insisted on conjugal sex, since it was the continual childbearing that undermined her health. (There was, of course, no question of using contraception.) One can only suppose that for Dickens it was the equivalent of those twenty-

or thirty-mile walks that he was fond of taking, at an average speed of 4.5 miles an hour—a way of releasing and relieving the extraordinary energy and nervous tension pent up in his small, neat body, while his dutiful wife lay back and thought of England (or, perhaps, *The Pickwick Papers*). The novels throw no direct light on the subject, because they contain not a single word about physical sexuality. Extreme reticence on this aspect of human behavior was of course compulsory for all Victorian novelists, but Dickens, unlike many of his peers (Thackeray, for example), does not seem to have chafed under the constraint. His imagination was exceptionally chaste. There is not a risqué joke, or a single scene that would “bring a blush into the cheek of the young person” (Podsnap's phrase), in his entire oeuvre. For an essentially comic writer this is a remarkable achievement.

For his readings Dickens revised extracts from his novels for dramatic effect. He supervised every detail of staging and lighting. He was addicted to the high that comes from thrilling and controlling an audience.

He seems to have subscribed to the view, widely held (or at least professed) among the Victorian middle classes, that normal women didn't have sexual appetites and put up with men's for the sake of matrimony and motherhood. His heroines are either childlike or saintly, pre-sexual or asexual (Dora and Agnes, in *David Copperfield*, are prime examples of each type, and Amy Dorrit combines the two). In life Dickens's most intense emotional relationships were with younger, virginal women, notably Mary Hogarth, Catherine's younger sister, who lived with them at the beginning of their married life and died suddenly and tragically, in Dickens's arms, aged only seventeen. He wore one of her rings for the rest of his life, kept her clothes and a lock of her hair, and said it was impossible to exaggerate her influence on him. In due course his sister-in-law Georgina came to occupy a similar place in the

household. She was a more intimate companion to Dickens than Catherine, and rumors that she was his mistress were quashed only when she submitted to a medical examination and was declared to be a virgin. Perhaps with Nelly he finally achieved a relationship that was both emotionally and erotically satisfying. One rather hopes so.

In the 1850s Dickens was going through what we would call a midlife crisis. Smiley does not attempt to excuse his treatment of Catherine, which was deplorable, but by viewing the episode from the perspective of our own “divorce culture,” and by empathizing with Dickens in the peculiar psychological pressures he suffered as artist, entrepreneur, and celebrity, she makes his behavior comprehensible. Like Edmund Wilson, in his classic essay “Dickens: The Two Scrooges,” she sees the novelist's imagination as essentially dualistic—constant-

ly affirming the necessity for virtue, love, and altruism, but constantly attracted to the portrayal of evil, cruelty, and hypocrisy. It is a critical commonplace that Dickens's most memorable characters are all morally flawed, if not outright villains. The unregenerate Scrooge is much more entertaining than the reformed one. Wilson traced this deep, dark vein in the novelist's work back to a traumatic episode in his childhood, when the twelve-year-old Dickens's father was imprisoned for debt and the boy was abruptly ejected from home and school and sent to work sticking labels on bottles in a blacking factory on the bank of the Thames, in the company of rats and a young orphan called Bob Fagin. Dickens kept this episode a secret from family and friends for most of his life. Around 1850 he wrote down the story for his eyes only, and later showed it to John Forster, who published it in his posthumous biography. “The deep

remembrance of the sense I had of being utterly neglected and hopeless," Dickens wrote, "of the shame I felt in my position; of the misery it was to my young heart to believe that, day by day, what I had learned, and thought, and delighted in, and raised my fancy and my emulation up by, was passing away from me, never to be brought back any more; cannot be written." Of course it *was* written, indirectly, in Dickens's incomparable rendering of oppressed and helpless children in his fiction, confirming Wilson's thesis. But Smiley cautions us against too reductively Freudian an interpretation of Dickens when she points out that novelists do not merely draw on personal experience of conflict in creating their work—they also in a sense discover it in the process of writing: "Art that has a revelatory effect upon the reader had its first revelatory effect upon the writer; the process of working out the plots and the relationships in an ambitious novel is always a learning process."

Writing fiction, in Smiley's view, is a way of imposing order on the chaotic flux of experience, to make it comprehensible and to project a vision of what it should or might be, and she offers the interesting suggestion that Dickens tried to make the real world correspond to his fictionally ordered version of it. She argues that the extraordinary amount of time and energy he expended on nonliterary activities of a philanthropic and social nature—the good works, the fundraising, the consciousness-raising, the speeches and dinners and parties and Christmas festivities and amateur theatricals—is best explained as an effort to embody in his own life the vision of the good society implicit in his books. To outward appearance he succeeded to an astonishing degree; but inwardly he was disappointed and unfulfilled in two aspects of his life: the affective and the erotic. In Nelly Ternan he saw a last chance to make up for this lack and seized it, putting in jeopardy the whole edifice of bourgeois respectability he had laboriously constructed. That is Smiley's analysis of the affair, and it is persuasive, as is her account of its effect on his professional career.

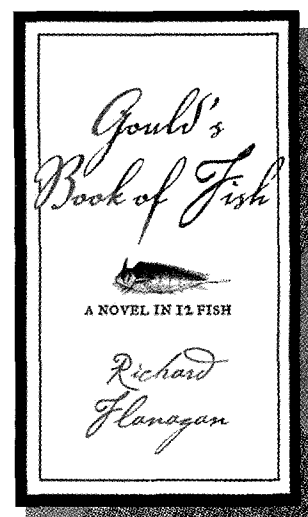
In spite of the smokescreen Dickens created around his relationship with Nelly, the rumors and journalistic coverage damaged his reputation as a model Victorian public man. "His ties to the mainstream ... loosened," Smiley writes. The values and aspirations of the middle-class reading public were no longer embodied unproblematically in his novels, which became darker and less reader-friendly. Younger readers found his work eccentrically old-fashioned; older readers regretted the passing of the genial, cheerful, reassuring tone of the early books.

In his own life he cultivated "the sorts of relationships that are primary in our century—one-to-one intimacies on the one hand, joined with star-to-audience performances on the other." These performances were the public readings that occupied Dickens more and more in the last decade of his life, and which undoubtedly hastened his death, in 1870, at the age of fifty-eight. They were by all accounts extraordinary events. Without the aid of artificial amplification he held huge audiences (2,000 in Birmingham, 3,700 in Bradford) spellbound. Listeners fainted at his rendering of the murder of Nancy by Bill Sikes. It was a natural extension of his enthusiasm for amateur theatricals, but by now Dickens was the complete professional. He revised the extracts from his novels to make them dramatically more effective, rehearsed every nuance of his delivery, and supervised every detail of the staging and lighting. He made a good deal of money from these performances, but that was not his primary motive for undertaking them. He was addicted to the high that comes from thrilling and controlling an audience. Smiley is also surely right to argue that it was a way of maintaining his unique relationship with the public. His readings consisted mostly of "golden oldies" from his early novels—*A Christmas Carol*, *Oliver Twist*, *Martin Chuzzlewit*. The appropriate modern analogy is not the more or less competent reading by a more or less nervous novelist in a bookshop or a literary-festival marquee but the triumphal tour of an aging, still charismatic pop star.

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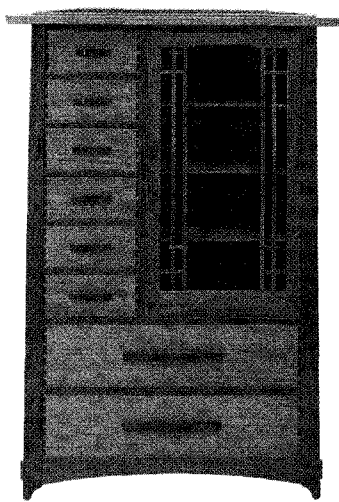
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In so short a book there is no room for extended critiques of individual novels, but Smiley gives a lucid account of Dickens's development as a novelist, and makes the grounds for her admiration clear. The earliest novels were remarkable mainly for their stylistic verve and virtuosity, especially in dialogue. The authorial narrator observes a rather stilted literary decorum, but the speech of characters like Sam Weller and Mr. Jingle is Shakespearean in its individuality and expressiveness. Sam, Smiley writes, "adds something unexpected to the narrative every time he opens his mouth." Structurally *Pickwick* is a mess and *Nicholas Nickleby* is not much better, but Dickens "was always striving in his work to include more and more, to make each novel bigger and broader and also more particular, and to make the links between all things less linear and more netlike." *Martin Chuzzlewit* is the first novel that Dickens unified by playing variations on a single theme (selfishness), but the narrative links are still rather strained. Smiley believes that *Dombey and Son* was Dickens's first fully achieved masterpiece, and few would disagree with her.

Since Lionel Trilling's seminal essay on *Little Dorrit*, academic critics have particularly admired that novel, and *Bleak House* (which belongs to the same phase of Dickens's career), perhaps because these books' somber social vision, complex structure, and elaborate symbolism lend themselves to critical exegesis. Smiley recognizes the originality and ambitiousness of these works, but her own preference is for novels like *Dombey* and *David Copperfield*, in which the relationship between narrative and theme is looser, and the political is subordinated to the personal. Here again her identification with her subject is clear: "The controversies that arise about Dickens's real political views, in my opinion, arise primarily from the fact that a novelist always, and increasingly, sees the trees rather than the forest, and is naturally unsympathetic to a collective solution, while always more or less in favor of a connective solution." The indefinite article before "novelist" is revealing. She is right to point out that Dickens, though a radical, was not

in our terms ideologically left-liberal. He despised politics, and advocated a "change of heart" as a solution to society's problems. He undoubtedly held views that we would regard today as "racist, imperialist, sometimes anti-Semitic." Fortunately, they were not central to his imaginative vision.

Although Dickens was the greatest of Victorian novelists, his work did not flow in the same direction as the strongest literary current of the period, which was toward greater and greater realism in the rendering of the social world and of individual psychology. In that respect the somewhat younger George Eliot was much more representative, and it is significant that in an article written in 1856, at the threshold of her own literary career, she criticized Dickens's depiction of human beings because he failed to "give us their psychological character." Henry James (who as a child hid under a table to listen to his father reading *David Copperfield* aloud, and was discovered when he was unable to restrain his sobs at the pathos of the story) put the boot into *Our Mutual Friend* in the same year that he published his first tale under his own name, complaining in a review that it was "wanting in inspiration" and its characters were "lifeless, forced, mechanical." Smiley, on the contrary, regards it as "Dickens's perfect novel, seamless and true and delightful in every line."

The prestige of the Jamesian poetics of fiction in the modern period, reinforced in England by the rather humorless and puritanical school of the critic F. R. Leavis (he famously dismissed Dickens as an "entertainer" in *The Great Tradition* [1948], though he offered a more generous estimate later), inhibited critical appreciation of Dickens. Smiley suggests that our post-modernist age is more receptive to his kind of "flat," larger-than-life, often grotesque characterization.

Dickens appeals to that part of the reader that recognizes that much is left undiscussed by reasonable discourse, that people and institutions often do populate our inner lives not as who they are but as what they mean to us, and that we often do not see them whole and complex, but simple and strange. This view, of course,

has an affinity with childhood, as Dickens had an affinity with childhood, but it also has an affinity with many states of consciousness throughout life, including madness or obsession and exalted states of love or spiritual transcendence. That Dickens submerged into his style many good, useful, and humane ideas is a testament to the fact that his vision did not prevent him from living and

working in the world, but simply intensified his experience of it. As he said to Forster, "Only think what the desperate intensity of my nature is."

Indeed. Jane Smiley has herself thought deeply about that desperately intense nature, and has enhanced our understanding and appreciation of the work it produced. ■

BOOKS

CALIFORNIA TRANSFORMED

The Golden State in the 1940s

BY BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

.....

Since 1973 Kevin Starr has been writing a monumental, multi-volume history of California: *Americans and the California Dream*. *Embattled Dreams*, the sixth book in this work, covers only a decade, the war years and their aftermath, but this period was unquestionably the most transformative in the state's history, because it was then that California emerged as an industrial and financial colossus and as the nation's dominant social and cultural force. As in his other volumes, the

**EMBATTLED DREAMS:
CALIFORNIA IN WAR
AND PEACE, 1940-1950**

by Kevin Starr

Oxford University Press
382 pages, \$35.00

scope of Starr's scholarship is breathtaking; this is a social, economic, political, and cultural history that covers such disparate subjects as popular San Francisco restaurants, shipbuilding, changes in domestic architecture, Raymond Chandler's fiction, the roots of anti-Japanese sentiment, baseball's Pacific Coast League, and the rise of Richard Nixon. Starr takes the long view; throughout his books he stresses continuities, rather than abrupt change. But World War II—more specifically, the federal spending that accompanied it—is the driving, almost deterministic, force in this installment. The U.S. government's largesse utterly, permanently transformed California's economy, and thus the nation's—and the world's. By far the most complex and compelling tale in this volume is how wartime spending essentially created the aeronautical industry, with California at its heart, and

in the process enabled capitalism to give rise to perhaps the closest approximation of a workers' paradise that has ever existed. (Starr argues convincingly that companies such as Douglas, Lockheed, and Northrop engendered "in terms of employee relations and benefits ... a planned social democratic utopia.") Defense jobs all but instantly assimilated and made prosperous the state's more than a million Okies—a group that, one would have assumed from reading *The Grapes of*

Wrath, written just before the war, would compose California's permanent underclass. And although the Golden State's war economy took off suddenly in 1940-1941, thanks to the Cold War it lasted half a century—a run that sustained a staggeringly large middle-class working class and that made California the high-tech center of the world, a status it holds to this day.

Academic historians tend to pooh-pooh Starr as a booster and a mere "storyteller." Certainly, compared with the trendy Mike Davis's unrelievedly dark vision of the state's history in *City of Quartz*, Starr's view is a bit rah-rah. (He devotes plenty of space to the internment of Japanese-Americans and to the L.A. Police Department's rather tawdry record on minority relations, but one senses that these sections of Starr's history, which detail well-known events, are perfunctorily PC.) As for the second

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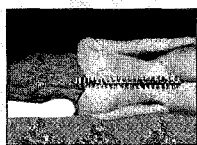
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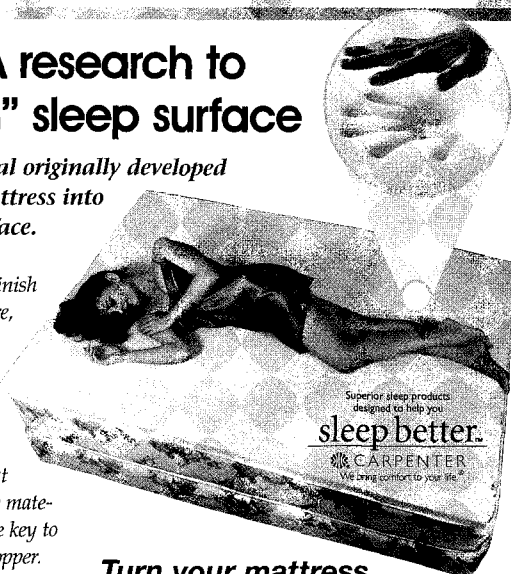


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indictment, Starr's is hardly the most analytical approach, but he tells his stories so intelligently and cleanly that readers who care to can make the connections and draw the conclusions that elude him in his more exuberant moments.

But despite his skill as a storyteller, one story is unaccountably and inexcusably missing from Starr's chronicle: Billy Graham's truly historic 1949 Los Angeles revival. Graham was an obscure preacher whose downtown crusade had already fizzled out when William Randolph Hearst's publicity machine made him, literally, an overnight sensation and thus enabled fundamentalism to regain its lost influence in American life. Graham's success is largely emblematic of the changes that the war years wrought on what Starr throughout the volumes of his history calls "The Folks"—those middle- and lower-middle-class Anglo-Saxons transplanted from the Midwest who for so long culturally defined much of California. With his perpetual tan, incessant references to golf, and sunny, reassuring take on the Gospels, Graham appealed to a large portion of Middle America and the Sun Belt—people who, in keeping with their times, wanted a Christianity that at least outwardly conformed to their parents' old-time religion, even as they joined the rest of postwar America in its pursuit of the good life. Although Starr neglects Graham, he focuses on another hero of The Folks: Earl Warren, California's Republican governor from 1943 to 1953, and later, of course, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, a man who arguably did more to advance what is now called the "progressive agenda" than any other figure in the second half of the twentieth century. Starr understands The Folks and their influence on the state well enough to discern that the rise of Warren as a national figure represented "the triumph of Midwestern, mid-American values, very white and tending toward the suburban, which motivated an entire era and propelled California into the forefront of national consciousness." Starr is too intelligent to feel nostalgic for the California of The Folks, but he is sufficiently unfashionable and independent-minded to sympathize with, rather than sneer at, their values. **A**



BOOKS

THE MAN OF FEELING

Lucky Jim, Kingsley Amis's comic masterpiece, may be the funniest book of the past half century

BY CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

.....

In *That Uncertain Feeling* (1955), one of Kingsley Amis's lesser novels, the narrator, John Lewis, is watching some young women play tennis, and decides to examine himself on an important question: "Why did I like women's breasts so much? I was clear on why I liked them, thanks, but why did I like them *so much*?" It's surprising, in a way, that Amis didn't capitalize those last words, as he was apt to do when he required any savage or emotional emphasis in his correspondence with Philip Larkin. (George Du Maurier's *Trilby*, for example, "might be a lot worse," he wrote. "AND A LOT BETTER.") But he seldom permitted any such heaviness to pervade his novels, and it is this very delicacy that allows one to answer the sensitive and dangerous question not Why is *Lucky Jim* funny? (daunting enough as an essay topic) but Why is it *so* funny?

I happened to be in Sarajevo when Kingsley Amis died, in 1995. I was to

have lunch the following day with a very clever but rather solemn Slovenian dissident. She knew that I had known Amis a little, and she expressed the proper condolences as soon as we met. Feeling this to be not quite sufficient, however, she added that the genre of "academic comedy" had enjoyed quite a vogue among Balkan writers. "In our region there are many such satires. But none I sink so amusing as *ze Lucky Jim*." This, delivered with perfect gravity in the lugubrious context of the Milosevic war, made me grin with inappropriate delight. How the old buzzard would have gagged, with mingled pride and disdain, at the thought of being so appreciated by a load of Continentals—nay, foreigners. And what the *hell* can his masterpiece be like when rendered into the Serbo-Croat tongue?

Just try to suggest a more hilarious novel from the past half century. Something by Joseph Heller? Terry Southern? David Lodge or Malcolm Bradbury?

Yes, the Americans can be grotesque and noir; and the Englishmen have their mite of irony. (In fact, the academic comedy is now a sub-genre of Anglo-Americanism.) But even so. The late Peter de Vries—much admired by Amis for his *Mackerel Plaza*—depended too much on the farcical. No, the plain fact is that Amis managed in *Lucky Jim* (1954) to synthesize the comic achievements of Evelyn Waugh and P. G. Wodehouse. Just as a joke is not really a joke if it has to be clarified, I risk immersion in a bog of embarrassment if I overdo this; but if you can picture Bertie or Jeeves being capable of actual malice, and simultaneously imagine Evelyn Waugh forgetting about original sin, you have the combination of innocence and experience that makes this short romp so imperishable.

"The most powerful card in the hand of the novelist interested in character drawing," Amis once said, cleverly restating the obvious, "is differentiation by mode of speech." Well, we knew that from Dickens, didn't we? But Dickens never managed to convey in a few opening lines the pulverizing tedium and irritation provoked by our first-paragraph encounter with Professor Welch.

"They made a silly mistake, though," the Professor of History said, and his smile, as Dixon watched, gradually sank beneath the surface of his features at the memory. "After the interval we did a little piece by Dowland," he went on; "for recorder and keyboard, you know. I played the recorder, of course, and young Johns ..." He paused, and his trunk grew rigid as he walked; it was as if some entirely different man, some impostor who couldn't copy his voice, had momentarily taken his place; then he went on again ...

Immediately one recognizes the lineaments ("you know," "of course," and "young Johns") of the practiced and un-interruptible bore. The absolute proof is delayed for a page or so, until Welch actually *is* interrupted—by a respectful and relevant question at that—and "his attention, like a squadron of slow old battleships, began wheeling to face this new phenomenon." At this moment, when our palms are getting slightly damp and our toes beginning to curl, Welch's aca-

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demic subordinate, the luckless Jim Dixon, has already mobilized his inner resources. He will when next alone "draw his lower lip in under his top teeth and by degrees retract his chin as far as possible, all this while dilating his eyes and nostrils," he promises himself. "By these means he would, he was confident, cause a deep dangerous flush to suffuse his face." Other "faces," denominated rather than described, include the shot-in-the-back face, the consumptive face, the tragic mask face, the mandarin, the crazy peasant, the Martian invader, the Eskimo, the Edith Sitwell, the metaphysical, the lemon-sucking, the mandrill, the lascar, the Evelyn Waugh, and the face that denotes "sex life in ancient Rome." Private faces in public places. All these are still to come, but we realize at once that if Dixon dared to wear an outward label, it would read "Warning: Contents Under Pressure." And as Chekhov stipulated, no gun that is onstage in the first act will be undischarged by the end. In other words, we are swiftly possessed by a sense of anticipation.

Not yet daring to play a subversive Sancho Panza to Welch's prolix Don Quixote, Dixon has also to register embarrassment of the most acute sort when he reflects upon the ghastly Margaret, a colleague to whom "he'd been drawn by a combination of virtues he hadn't known he possessed: politeness, friendly interest, ordinary concern, a good-natured willingness to be imposed upon, a desire for unequivocal friendship." This exposes him to such questions as "Do you like coming to see me?" "Do you think we get on well together?" "Am I the only girl you know in this place?" and—as the horror mounts—"Are we going to go on seeing so much of each other?" Dixon has to light cigarettes he cannot afford at the mere recollection of this. Having already recalled Paul Pennyfeather, in *Decline and Fall*, tyrannized by the cranky and solipsistic Dr. Fagan, he now puts me very much in mind of Bertie Wooster when confronted by the simpering Madeleine Bassett. Except that Madeleine Bassett was pretty and innocent, whereas Margaret (as Amis deftly conveys to us while keeping it from Dixon) is designing and sinister as well

as ugly and frigid. It is only through a chance meeting with another man, Catchpole, that the decent and ingenious Dixon eventually discovers just how designing and sinister she is. As with the faces, where Amis is confident that the reader will do much of the work in imagining how they might look (and feel), he can reliably convey character in just a few strokes.

Without overdrawing his picture of powerlessness and entrapment, Amis awards Dixon a mediocre physique ("on the short side, fair and round-faced, with an unusual breadth of shoulder that had never been accompanied by any special strength or skill"). He further gifts him with shabby clothes, a lack of funds, provincial manners, and a cramped room in a dismal boarding-house. Expert in the uses of humiliation, Amis takes only a sentence to introduce Michie, the most intimidating student in Dixon's sorely neglected class, who had "commanded a tank troop at Anzio while Dixon was an RAF corporal in western Scotland."

And how immediately one is ready to detest and abominate Bertrand, the pseudo-aesthete and bully who is the spoiled son of the vapid Professor Welch and his hard-boiled wife. Not only does he have a bad beard and an affectedly metropolitan manner, but this gargoyle pronounces the word "see" as "*sam*." The extremely trying noise comes out like this:

The vowel sound became distorted into a short "a," as if he were going to say "sat." This brought his lips some way apart, and the effect of their rapid closure was to end the syllable with a light but audible "m."

I pause to note two things. The first is that this invention owes much to Amis's gift for poetry, and to his superlative qualities as a mimic. The second is that having coined it, he pushes it no further than it ought to be pushed. At evenly spaced intervals we and Jim Dixon hear Bertrand say "you sam," "hostelram," "got mam?," "this is just how I expected things to bam," and (most tellingly, in my view) "obviouslam." Again we feel a warm thrill of anticipation, realizing that someday Bertrand will say "you sam" once too often.

Metaphors and details are inserted so deftly that one scarcely notices how they push the action along. "Fury flared up in his mind like forgotten toast under a grill." A fellow lodger of Dixon's is described as employing a new pipe around which to train his personality "like a creeper up a trellis." A bellowing bandleader sounds like "an ogre at the onset of aphasia." The hideous Welches, at a musical recital, serve "coffee and cakes, intended to replace an evening meal." By these and further hints we build up a picture of Amis's attitude at the time, his genius for provincial and small-scale subversion.

Like the burned sheets and scorched but nonetheless "valuable-looking" rug that confront Jim in his nadir of hung-over disgrace at the Welches', the threadbare phrase "Angry Young Man" doesn't quite cover it. Dixon's rebellion arises from two simple elements of the servile condition: "real, over-mastering, orgiastic boredom, and its companion, real hatred." There are one or two political hints. Margaret turns out to sing for a local Conservative club, and Jim's first quarrel with Bertrand concerns the non-virtues of the rich. Thinking about his laughable scholarly project on medieval shipbuilding techniques, he reflects,

Those who professed themselves unable to believe in the reality of human progress ought to cheer themselves up, as the students under examination had conceivably been cheered up, by a short study of the Middle Ages. The hydrogen bomb, the South African Government, Chiang Kai-Shek, Senator McCarthy himself, would then seem a light price to pay for no longer being in the Middle Ages.

And Mrs. Welch is represented as hostile to the welfare state. It's odd, and useful, to remember that when he was writing *Lucky Jim*, Amis was not yet completely through with the Communist Party. Yet one sees also the first symptoms of his famous turn toward the conservative world view. He shows a fine disdain for the new college system, where, as one of his more sympathetic characters puts it, "All right, we'll lower the pass mark to twenty percent and give you the quantity you

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want, but for God's sake don't start complaining in two years' time that your schools are full of teachers who couldn't pass the General Certificate themselves, let alone teach anyone else to pass it."

I claim to be the first reader to notice that there are a number of suggestive correlations between *Lucky Jim* and George Orwell's *Keep the Aspidochelone Flying*. Jim Dixon and Gordon Comstock both have jobs they hate, and authorities to whom they must truckle. They are both oppressed by sterile and burdensome chunks of "work in progress." They both measure the days in cigarettes, often smoking one reserved for sometime next week. They both attack alcohol without compunction when given the chance, or the spare change, and both register penitential hangovers. They both live in grim furnished lodgings for bachelors. They both suffer from difficulties, or lucklessness, with women. Each has a rich patron capable of acting as a *deus ex machina*. Moreover, the prettiest girl in Dixon's class (she is of course the partner of the self-assured Michie) is named Eileen O'Shaughnessy, as was Orwell's first wife. So it is perhaps possible to "locate" *Lucky Jim* in a tradition of English underdog writing, just as it was later plausible to "situate" it along with the work of John Osborne, John Wain, and other authors of postwar England. The difference, it is scarcely necessary to emphasize, is that *Lucky Jim* is wildly and anarchically funny, and that Dixon, so far from lapsing into anomie, is capable of seizing opportunity when it comes and making, literally, the best of it.

In October of 1954 an influential review in *The Spectator* announced the arrival of a "Movement," composed of Amis, Wain, Elizabeth Jennings, Thom Gunn, D. J. Enright, and Iris Murdoch, among others. The article's author, J. D. Scott, summarized the putative membership as "bored by the despair of the Forties, not much interested in suffering, and extremely impatient of poetic sensibility, especially poetic sensibility about 'the writer and society'."

So it's goodbye to all those rather sad little discussions about "how the writer ought to live," and it's goodbye to the Little Magazine and "experimental writing." The Movement, as well as being anti-phoney, is anti-wet; sceptical, robust, ironic, prepared to be as comfortable as possible.

Amis's immediate reaction was to write to Philip Larkin and say, "Well, what a load of bullshit all that was in the *Spr* about the new movt. etc." And Evelyn Waugh wrote a rather grand letter of rebuke to the magazine the following week, concluding, "Please let the young people of today get on with their work alone and be treated to the courtesy of individual attention. They are the less, not the more, interesting, if they are treated as a 'Movement.'" But it seems that critics need aggregates, and prefer to deal with writers in packs. They also appear to require some form of semiotics. Robert Conquest—the actual founder of "The Movement" as a poetic phenomenon—later wrote an essay for *Critical Quarterly* titled "Christian Symbolism in *Lucky Jim*," which was an obvious spoof from the first page, citing "The Phallus Theme in Early Amis" and other learned articles. The magazine received so many serious and literal-minded letters, disputing some of the hermeneutic points, that the editors felt compelled to publish a disclaimer in the next issue, thus anticipating the *Social Text* hoax by some decades. Humor, as I was trying to say earlier, becomes distinctly less hysterical the more it has to be explained.

There is one element in the creation of *Lucky Jim* that has received insufficient attention and might (I suppose) gratify some of those critics who believe in collective or collaborative authorship. The novel was, quite evidently, co-written with Philip Larkin. At the onset of their Oxford friendship it was Larkin who wanted to be, and was, a novelist, and Amis who hoped to be, and was, a poet. One of the many charms of *The Letters of Kingsley Amis* (2000), which has been edited in masterly fashion by Zachary Leader, is the way in which the collection demonstrates the slow transformation of this symbiotic relationship, whereby each man took on some of the qualities of the other and

mutated rather nicely into a counterpart rather than an opposite. Larkin's early novel *Jill* was a satire on low-level academic miseries, and he was the dedicatee of *Lucky Jim* at a time when he was too little known to be included in the roundup of The Movement.

We know, because Amis tells us in his memoirs (1991), that the idea for the novel came from a visit to Larkin's roost at University College, Leicester, where he lived on Dixon Drive. From the same pages we learn:

In 1950 or so I sent him my sprawling first draft and got back what amounted to a synopsis of the first third of the structure and other things besides. He decimated the characters that, in carried-away style, I had poured into the tale without care for the plot: local magnate Sir George Wettling, cricket-loving Philip Orchard, vivacious American visitor Teddy Wilson ...

(Thank Christ for that, one hears oneself murmuring, even though Amis would have reproved the incorrect use of the word "decimate" by anyone else.) Larkin also prohibited the novel from being titled *Dixon and Christine*. But the debt is much deeper and more subtle, as the *Letters* gradually discloses. Writing to the man he loved (there's no question about it), Amis describes the terrible imposition of his father-in-law (model for Welch) and says, "Whenever his face was turned away from mine, I screwed my own into a dazzle-pattern of hatred and fury." A month later he confides,

If the style of this epistle becomes a little stiff and ungainly, or even incoherent, that will not be, I am sorry to say, because I am drunk, but because I mustn't light another cigarette until 11.30 a.m., and it is now 11.2 a.m., and I want to light a cigarette now, but I mustn't do that, because I have so little money to spend, and if I light a cigarette now, the packet that must last me for two days won't. You might tell me, by the way, what was good in my postscript.

The postscript, like the cigarette rationing, turns out to be part of the scheme for *Lucky Jim*. In a subsequent letter, dated September 8, 1952, Amis rehearses almost every facet of the novel in accordance with Larkin's instructions. The paragraphing is the result of a meticulous collaboration, with sequence headings

("the library," "the lecture," "the job," "Bertrand's pass," "Mediaevalism") that addicts will easily recognize as the eventual core ingredients. In all instances Amis was happy and grateful for trenchant advice. Then there is an appeal based on pure friendship and trust.

Would it be asking too much to ask you to skim quickly through the typescript, making marginal indications of anything that displeases you? ("Bad style," "damp squib", bad bit of dialogue & so on, to prevent me using them again.)

Two months later he was promising Larkin to restart the novel—by this time titled *The Man of Feeling*—from scratch. By March of 1953 he was more or less finished, altering only a few curlicues ("I have changed 'his Indian beggar face' to 'his Evelyn Waugh face'").

This is not only a very moving acknowledgment—Amis freely donated these letters to posterity—of the invaluable influence of a fellow author. It is also, unless I am quite deluded, the clue to an underappreciated aspect of the novel. Extensive tracts of *Lucky Jim* are not humorous at all—deliberately not humorous, if you follow me. Bleakness obtrudes, especially in the many discussions and depictions of unhappiness, mediocrity, failure, and even suicide. Most of Dixon's inoffensive friends (he's always called Dixon) are as much doomed to disappointment and indigence as he at first seems to be. And his disasters and triumphs are rendered in such a way as to put us in mind of manic-depressive mood swings. (At one point he feels like a man who while fighting a policeman sees another policeman approaching on a horse; later he feels like a man being awarded a medal who is simultaneously told of a large win in the lottery.) The crowning, triumphant tautology—the limitless way in which nice things are nicer than nasty things—is no comfort to the afflicted. It is more of a stoic cliché, of the sort in which Larkin later specialized. Dixon also has a persistent, almost Chekhovian yearning to quit the provinces and move to the capital city, of which he has an idealized impression. Larkin stayed with the provinces: Leicester, Belfast, and eventually Hull, whereas Amis moved to London when he became

a success. This partial estrangement between the two was what underlay their subsequent lifelong correspondence.

Both men thought of boredom as a form of tyranny and also (more important) as a symptom of it. To them, the bores of the world were not merely tedious. They were, by their dogma and repetition and righteousness, advertising an evil will to power. Dixon's eventual explosion of drunken defiance is something more than an enjoyable fiasco or—ancient Rome again—saturnalia. It gives expression to a term that seems incongruous when one first reads it: "active hatred." This is the only possible riposte to "orgiastic boredom." No one familiar with Larkin's caustic, understated poetic contempt can fail to recognize the kinship here.

Evelyn Waugh punished an Oxford Edon who had bored him—a Dr. Cruttwell—by using his name for purposes of ridicule in at least four novels. Amis took revenge against an editor named Caton by using his name for hateful or shifty parts in his first five books and then killing him off in *The Anti-Death League* (1966). It is Caton who plagiarizes the deadly essay—*The Economic Influence of the Developments of Shipbuilding Techniques, 1450 to 1485*—with which Dixon has been killing himself (with boredom). The self-hatred that can also arise from boredom is hilariously caught when Dixon mordantly reviews his own opening sentence.

"In considering this strangely neglected topic," it began. This what neglected topic? This strangely what topic? This strangely neglected what? His thinking all this without having defiled and set fire to the typescript only made him appear to himself as more of a hypocrite and fool.

Hilarious but somewhat sobering. Dixon's later self-manumission needs to be seen in this light, as part of the declaration of Amis's protracted war against hypocrisy and phoniness of all kinds, a war in which Larkin was to be his long-term ally. The ensuing novels, at their best, all contain elements first tested in *Lucky Jim*. The brilliant indirect line about the mock-threatening letter ("There seemed no point in not

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posting it”) recurs in *Girl, 20* (1971), in which another valuable rug is destroyed—this time to the narrator’s displeasure. In that same novel the hero has to run hard for a bus, and discovers that a young woman is making sinister use of pills. He also has to go on a date in surroundings of musical chaos even more raucous than those Dixon endures at “the ball.” Roger Micheldene, in *One Fat Englishman* (1963), is confronted with every type of pretentious academic tomfoolery; and he finds, as Dixon did with Christine, that girls threaten to leave when men start fighting over them. *One Fat Englishman*, Amis’s only novel set in the United States, also begins in the middle of a dialogue. The asexual and ambitious woman is a recurrent theme for which Amis got himself accused of misogyny; but every objective person of either sex will admit to having met the terrifying Margaret in his or her time. Her “anterior bad luck of being sexually unattractive,” a misfortune that is given full play in *Ending Up* (1974), is one of those facts of life from which Amis never spared his male characters either. (Actually, *Lucky Jim* is notable for the near complete absence of any explicit carnality—a considerable sacrifice for either a comic or a “serious” writer.)

It’s not absolutely clear how the novel eventually came to be baptized, after its hideous first two tryout titles. But toward the end (and after he has nearly wrecked himself to catch the crucial bus) Jim does reflect on luck. As happens so often, fortune is coterminous with a lady.

To write things down as luck wasn’t the same as writing them off as non-existent or in some way beneath consideration. Christine was nicer and prettier than Margaret, and all the deductions that could be drawn from that fact should be drawn: there was no end to the ways in which nice things are nicer than nasty ones. It had been luck, too, that had freed him from pity’s adhesive plaster: if Catchpole had been a different sort of man, he, Dixon, would still be wrapped up as firmly as ever. And now he badly needed another dose of luck. *If it came, he might yet prove to be of use to somebody.*

The italics are mine. The statement, and the thought, are profoundly moral. Beware what you wish for, unless you have the grace to hope that your luck can be shared. *Lucky Jim* illustrates a crucial human difference between the little guy and the small man. And Dixon, like his creator, was no clown but a man of feeling after all. ▀

BOOKS

NEW & NOTEWORTHY

Summer between hard covers; the century in a house

.....

The writer Barry Lopez has described the Eskimo concept of *perlerorneq*, an extreme wintertime depression that can drive sufferers to run half-naked out of their igloos, screaming into the noonday darkness, and devouring malamute scat. Baseball fans will know this bleak phenomenon by its more common name, the off-season—which, by virtue of a calendrical oddity no one has adequately explained, some-



BASEBALL: A LITERARY ANTHOLOGY

*edited by
Nicholas
Dawidoff*

The Library of
America, 721
pages, \$35.00

how lasts a little longer every year. The Library of America’s indispensable new anthology may just be *perlerorneq*’s only known antidote.

For make no mistake (as the most gaffe-prone man in the country is forever telling us)—this anthology is summer between hard covers. The editor, Nicholas Dawidoff, played some second base for Harvard, and his range is something to behold. He gives us the crooked World Series of 1919 not only from the Chicagoan Nelson Algren’s perspective (“Every bleacher has-been, newspaper mediocrity and pulpit inanity seized the chance to regain his lost pride at the expense of seven of the finest athletes

who ever hit into a double play”) but also from that of the undersung writer James A. Maxwell, who at age seven refused to believe that his beloved Reds hadn’t won it fair and square. And sure, Dawidoff gives us the black sportswriter Wendell Smith’s contagious pride at Jackie Robinson’s first minor-league game, but he gives us Amiri Baraka, too: “So out of the California laboratories of USC, a synthetic colored guy was imperfect and soon we would be trooping back into the holy see of racist appropriation.” (Not USC, in fact, but UCLA—as a footnote might’ve told us.)

The greater any second baseman’s range, as any student of the game will tell you, the more errors he’ll make on balls a lesser glove man might not even reach. So it is with Dawidoff. His collection has exactly one consistent flaw, but it’s a humdinger: the book too often neglects cities other than New York except as straight men, sparring partners for the Yankees, the Giants, and the Dodgers to work out their heroic destinies against. As a hardened Red Sox fan, Dawidoff should’ve known better. He tries to inoculate himself against this charge in his otherwise beguiling introduction, pleading defensively that “the people whose business it is to make ballplayers interesting have tended to cluster in the nation’s biggest city.” Reasoning this circular would make a baseball look square. It’s publishers who cluster in Manhattan; interesting writers can and do live anywhere. Dawidoff compounds his crime by suggesting that players in St. Louis, for example, “never had someone like Jimmy Breslin, Murray Kempton, Roger Angell, or Joel Oppenheimer to watch over them.” Oh, yeah? A St. Louisan named David Carkeet wrote *The Greatest Slump of All Time*, a baseball novel so funny that audiobook manufacturers hesitate to record it for fear of vehicular liability. That it doesn’t get a call-up from Dawidoff does little for our confidence in his knowledge of baseball writing outside the Northeast.

Of course, second-guessing the lineup card is a tradition as old as baseball. No amount of razzing from the bleachers should detract from the unalloyed joy of reading such players as Sam

Crawford, Moe Berg, and Keith Hernandez, or such reporters as Angell, W. C. Heinz, and Roger Kahn. When it’s not players and reporters, it’s essayists—John Updike, Willie Morris, Jonathan Schwartz—or fictioneers such as Bernard Malamud, Ring Lardner, James Thurber, Don DeLillo, and the unheralded Eric Rolfe Greenberg, whose sole novel so far, *The Celebrant*, marks him out as a mysteriously sidetracked natural to rival Malamud’s own. Dawidoff also gets good production from several poets—including Carl Sandburg, Robert Frost, and William Carlos Williams, all playing out of position in prose. Alas, a few literary forms go unrepresented here. Dawidoff wisely finds room for some terrific oral histories, but misses the chance to transcribe any poetry from those impromptu bards, the broadcasters. And if he’s going to include a scene from *Damn Yankees* (again, wisely), where’s one from Ron Shelton’s screenplay for *Bull Durham*?

But only an ingrate walks home from a no-hitter wishing for a perfect game. Just don’t try to read all 721 pages of *Baseball: A Literary Anthology* in one sitting. As my uncle Albert (a semi-pro second baseman who once almost played Cleveland’s Johnny Hodapp out of a job) used to say about his nephew’s Dodger Dog intake, pace yourself. Save some for December. —DAVID KIPEN

Many of Penelope Lively’s fine novels, stories, and children’s books, notably *Moon Tiger* (1987) and *A Stitch in Time* (1976), have dealt in one way or another with the subtle but tenacious links between historical forces and personal memory. Now, with *A House Unlocked*, she presents herself and her family as direct participants, albeit frequently passive and unconscious ones, in the feverish drama of the twentieth century.

Lively has chosen to examine the century through Golsoncott, the large Edwardian country house in west Somerset that was occupied by her grandmother and then her aunt from 1923 to



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FOR THE FIRST TIME, PERHAPS, A TENABLE HISTORY OF JESUS

It won't be found in the Bible. Critical examination of the New Testament Gospels reveal sloppy history, which gives a picture of Jesus more imaginative than factual. Most Christians seem not to notice or care—transcendentalism spins its own reality. But true realists, for whom historical accuracy matters, may be pleased with what the recently discovered *Gospel of Thomas* provides. It consists of 113 notes taken down by Thomas of perplexing things that Jesus said. Thus the notes were probably written down at the time heard and have not suffered alteration ---the best kind of source for a history.

Jack Hannah in *You Will Not Taste Death: Jesus and Epicureanism* recognizes the notes as chronologically ordered and correlative with the skeletal history used in the *Gospel of Mark*. He provides all the text of the notes with comments and Marcan context, thereby developing a narrative of Jesus that is tenably historical.

This *historical* Jesus based his teaching on the Epicurean philosophy, not on Judaism with its fasting, praying, almsgiving, and obeying food laws. Instead, this *historical* Jesus said, "Tell no lie and never do what you hate." This *historical* Jesus never mentioned a devil, demons, or hell.

The most radical difference, however, is that Epicureanism also shaped Jesus' thought that God and Caesar are man-made authorities, and that one's ultimate authority should be oneself. Hannah's book is 321 pgs., pbk., \$12 postpaid.

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1995. Going through the familiar rooms in memory and imagination, Lively picks out particular objects and observes their significance in terms of larger trends. "The entire place—its furnishings, its functions—seemed like a set of coded allusions to a complete sequence of social change and historical clamor." Quiet, rural, intensely conservative, Golsoncote would appear to have been untouched by the modern world; yet, guided by Lively, we can see unmistakable traces of international tragedy and upheaval. There are, for example, the framed photographs of the foreigners who sought refuge there and became, for a time, part of the family: a Russian woman and her children who fled the Bolsheviks in the 1920s; a Viennese boy who fled the Nazis in 1939. A sampler stitched by Lively's grandmother in 1946 depicts not only the estate's lily pond and stables but also six cockney children, billeted at Golsoncote during the London Blitz. Thus the house bears witness to "one of the great human themes of the twentieth century—that of those displaced in time and space."

The advance of the railway; the unprecedented familiarization of city dwellers with the country and vice versa; an equally unprecedented social mobility; the drastically declining role of the Church in English life; a radical reconception of the family: all these find their symbolic referents in Golsoncote's furnishings. The sideboard's stash of now tarnished, neglected silver—including arcane items such as bonbon dishes and grape scissors—is a visible emblem of the great postwar "trauma of the middle class occasioned by the death of domestic service." "When I examine my grandmother's deepest assumptions," Lively observes with a certain amusement, "it is her attitude towards household management that seems to be the one that removes her farthest from me." As for drudgery like washing dishes, she continues, "My grandmother considered that it should be done for her by others, and furthermore that such others would always be available, in the natural order of things; I find this viewpoint almost as inaccessible as Creationism." Lively writes the sort of graceful, unobtrusive English that is rare these days—almost

as redolent of time's passing, in fact, as her grandmother's tarnished silver. *A House Unlocked* is a very personal book, and the personality that shines through is an attractive one: diffident, thoughtful, gentle. —BROOKE ALLEN

At last this book is back in print. Military historians try to impose order—but not an artificial order, with tidy accounts of battles and neat blocks on maps—on events characterized, even defined, by chaos. This is always a daunting task. It is nearly impossible when the subject is not



and important event in modern human history. A number of accomplished historians—among them John Keegan, Gerhard Weinberg, Martin Gilbert, Peter Calvo-coressi, Guy Wint, Williamson Murray, and Allan Millett—have written single-volume accounts of the war. But this one, originally published in 1989 as *Struggle for Survival* and revised in a British edition in 1997, is by far the best. Briskly written, *The Second World War* manages to be at once succinct and thorough, sharp and nuanced, as it elucidates various aspects of the conflict—air, naval, and ground operations; war finance; military technology; propaganda; and changes in tactics, to name a few—along with its disparate theaters and campaigns: the North Atlantic, Western Europe, the Pacific, China, North Africa, Italy, Russia, and the Balkans. Unlike most other one-volume chronicles of the war, which concentrate almost exclusively on military operations, *The Second World War* surveys its political, diplomatic, demographic, and economic ramifications as well (R.A.C. Parker, who died last year, was primarily a scholar of pre-war British diplomacy). In addition to its other virtues, this trenchant, elegant survey contains the most lucid summation I've read of the Nazis' murder of the European



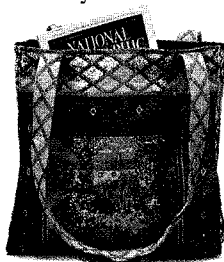
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Jews. Parker's accounts of both this fraught subject and the almost equally contentious topic of strategic bombing are cool and balanced; his judgments are skeptical and subtle yet sure.

Alas, *The Second World War* has a single, but egregious, flaw. Parker's magisterial view of the conflict forces him to conclude, quite correctly, that "the great Russo-German land battle determined the whole course of the war." But, in common with every other British or American history of the war, Parker's treats the Eastern front cursorily. (His

decision to assess the second Battle of El Alamein in greater detail than the Battle of Kursk—the pivotal event of the war and the largest battle in history—is indefensible.) Everyone who wants to be well informed should own—and read—this chronicle. But to truly grasp the war the reader must pair Parker's book with the authoritative survey of the epic Russo-German struggle, David M. Glantz and Jonathan M. House's *When Titans Clashed* (1995). Ultimately, Parker failed to impose order on the war; but no one has come closer. —BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

BOOKS

A SURPRISE, BUT NOT A SUCCESS

Though Richard Nixon meant to do the right thing, his actions were at odds with his principles

BY TAMAR JACOBY

.....

Few Americans know it, but in fact Richard Nixon, even more than John Kennedy or Lyndon Johnson, shaped the civil-rights landscape we inhabit today. Nixon broke the will of the South, making school desegregation, long on the books but largely unimplemented, a reality for millions of children black and white. He presided over the nationalization of the Voting Rights Act, extending it beyond the South to cover all Americans—including Latinos. He oversaw the birth of bilingual education and averted the death of historically black colleges. Most important, for better or worse, he and his aides created affirmative action as we know it, turning a vague idea about a leg up at the starting gate into a vast national web of "goals and timetables" at colleges, corporations, and government contracting agencies.

Nixon's Civil Rights: Politics, Principle, and Policy tracks this momentous record in dense, revealing detail. The story begins in the 1950s, with Nixon's early friendship with Martin Luther King Jr., and ends with his last acts in office, as—even under the shadow of Watergate—he made time to meet with black college

presidents. Dean J. Kotlowski, an assistant professor of history at Salisbury University, in Maryland, has combed scores of archives and interviewed key participants to construct a fascinating meeting-by-meeting account. This is an authoritative but also readable volume that will surprise just about everyone who picks it up.

Kotlowski is an old-fashioned liberal: he never met a civil-rights remedy—not even busing or municipal set-asides—he didn't like, and Kotlowski doesn't hesitate to be critical of Nixon when he feels that criticism is due. His tribute is thus all the more credible. But unfortunately, his views also obscure his story at times, making it hard for him to enter into Nixon's mind—and harder still for readers ultimately to judge the President's accomplishment.

Though more scholar than storyteller, Kotlowski nevertheless manages to bring Nixon alive; the picture he paints of life in the White House in the late 1960s is telling if not exactly pungent. (The book refers repeatedly, for example, to Nixon's penchant for racist slurs, but we never hear anything even remotely damning.) He captures not

NIXON'S CIVIL RIGHTS: POLITICS, PRINCIPLE, AND POLICY

by Dean J. Kotlowski
Harvard University Press
404 pages, \$35.00

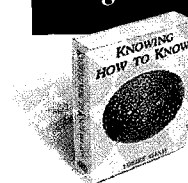
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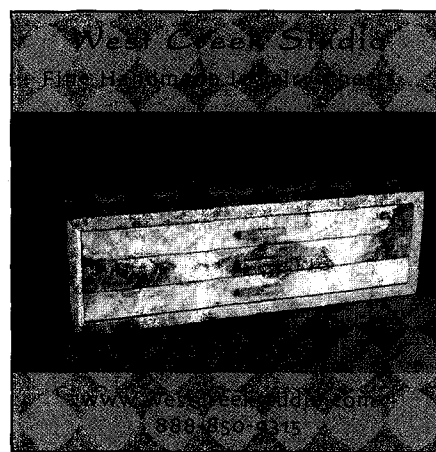
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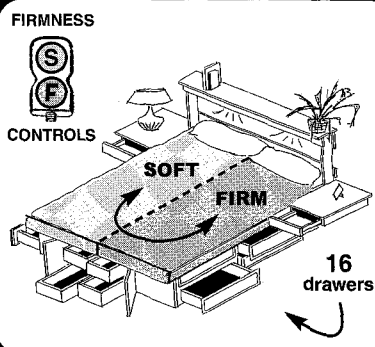
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just the man in charge but also a host of Nixon's lieutenants: Spiro Agnew, John Ehrlichman, Leonard Garment, George Romney, Maurice Stans, and others. Kotlowski's most important point—not exactly a new idea about Nixon, but probably, as the book claims, the key to his civil-rights policy—has to do with the sympathy, shared by the President and all his aides, for America's proverbial “little guy.”

No matter how much power he wielded, Nixon saw himself as a beleaguered outsider, fundamentally at odds with the nation's well-born, well-educated elite. Kotlowski explains,

On racial issues, such resentment saddled Nixon with the same prejudices [as] the middle-class whites whom he claimed to represent. Yet it also instilled an aversion to artificial barriers that prevented people from rising as far as their talents permitted.

The thirty-seventh President may or may not have seen black people as the equals of whites—he probably didn't, according to Kotlowski. But the scrappy contender in him was as strong as, if not stronger than, the bigot, and he was deeply committed to equal opportunity. Of course, like all his beliefs, this impulse was tempered by political calculation: Nixon never did anything without considering how it would look to voters, particularly the southern and white-ethnic voters who increasingly

formed the core of the Republican Party. But politic or not, Kotlowski says, Nixon's sympathy for the struggling outsider drove him to try to level the playing field—even when that meant helping blacks at the expense of whites.

Not that Nixon was a conventional civil-rights liberal—far from it. He loathed protest and protesters. He had nothing but scorn for big government and its dependents. And he didn't believe in integration for integration's sake. Not only would such a goal be unpopular and sure to cost him votes if he pushed for it, but he found it antithetical to freedom and, in the long run, trivial. He was willing—even determined—to remove racial barriers, but reluctant to force people to mingle, whether at school or in their neighborhoods. Far more important, in his view, was creating opportunities for black economic development. The Democrats were “token-oriented,” he claimed, whereas the Republicans focused on “results.”

What this meant in practice was making jobs available and, even more important, encouraging blacks to start their own businesses—the surest way, Nixon believed, for them to get on the escalator that automatically moves most Americans up into the middle class. It was an old Republican strategy, but also a time-honored black path—the avenue advocated by Booker T. Washington (and scoffed at by W.E.B. Du Bois and other



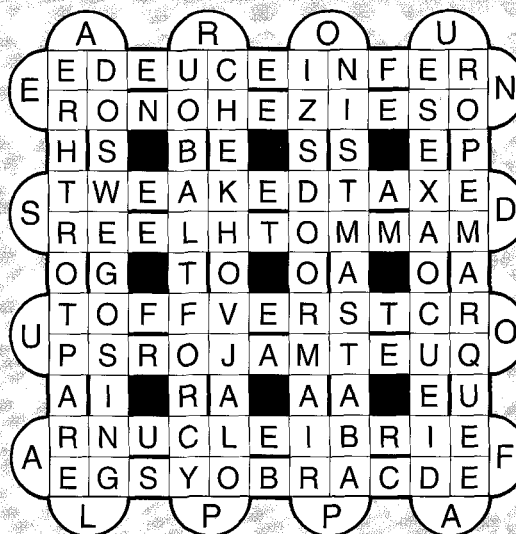
Nixon (c.) greets King as Labor Sec. Mitchell looks on.

progenitors of the civil-rights movement). By creating black capitalists—with government loans, set-asides, and other means—the Administration hoped to encourage bourgeois values and the spread of black Republicanism. In effect Nixon and his aides sought to create a black America in their own image: a new class of scrappy, small-time entrepreneurs, determined despite the disadvantages of their birth to make it on their own.

It wasn't a bad idea. The question is, where did it go wrong? How did it spawn the rigid, color-coded double standards we know today as racial preferences? If *Nixon's Civil Rights* will surprise liberals by revealing how much their favored policies owe to Nixon, it will be even more surprising (and disturbing) to racial conservatives—those committed to the goal of racial justice but concerned about conventional liberal means of realizing it. For these readers, Nixon's principles are thrilling but many of his policies are anathema. And Kotlowski, whatever his other strengths, is a poor guide to understanding how the nation might have applied Nixon's insights to achieve a better result.

Take desegregation. Kotlowski claims that Nixon's approach to busing was driven by politics. The President wanted to do the right thing—eliminate legal segregation. But he was also anxious not to alienate conservative voters, particularly white ethnics in the North. So he chose what Kotlowski sees as a clever but cowardly middle course: dismantling de jure segregation in the South while turning a blind eye to the de facto variety in the North. Maybe so. Political calculations surely played some part in the President's thinking. But Kotlowski fails to credit the genuine philosophical distinction Nixon drew between segregation imposed by law and segregation resulting from years of personal choices by both whites and blacks. As a result, the book doesn't do justice to the principled core of his policy. In fact, history has proved Nixon exactly right: when it comes to desegregation, as one aide put it, "the more coercive the techniques ... the more doomed to failure the effort will be." Whatever pressure he had to apply to engineer mixed schooling in

ANSWERS TO THE APRIL PUZZLER

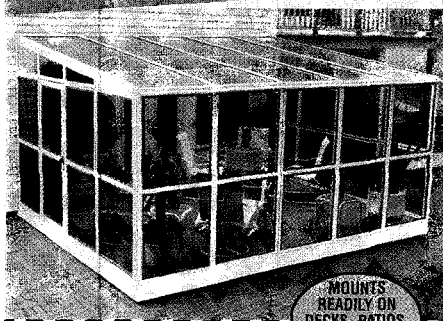


"Loops"

1. a. INFER + N + O b. SEIZE (homophone) c. HONOREE (anag.) d. DEUCE (double def.)
2. a. LEE(R)S b. TWE(A + K)ED c. T + AXED d. M(A + M + M)OTH 3. a. MAJ + ORS (rev.) b. PU(TO)FF c. VER + ST (rev rev.) d. CRO + QUET (homophone) 4. a. NUCLEI (anag.) b. BRIE + FED c. CAR + BOYS d. GEAR (anag.) 5. a. RAPTOR (anag.) b. TH(R)E + AD c. OS + W + E + CO d. SING(L)E 6. a. JA(LOP)Y b. CR + OPT c. LAB + OUR d. CHEKHOV (check off homophone) 7. a. ZI(ON + IS)T b. M(A + STAB)A c. PRI(A)M d. ROOD + S (rev.) 8. a. CO(A)XES b. EUROPE (hidden) c. MAR + QUEE(n) d. A(DIE)U

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the South, Nixon knew intuitively what it has taken the country decades to learn: that the only kind of integration likely to endure is voluntary, and between social equals. Thus his attempt to create a confident black middle class.

Still, shrewd as he was on busing, there are questions—hard, complex questions—to be asked about what happened to integration in general on Nixon's watch. Though it was unpopular at the time with civil-rights leaders and other liberals, the President's emphasis on black economic development was a hugely important breakthrough. After all, no one believes today that merely sitting next to whites in school, or even sharing neighborhoods with them, would have been enough to lift blacks out of poverty. The question in retrospect is whether Nixon could have shifted the focus to economic development without encouraging separatism, color-coding, and counting by race—as his policies did.

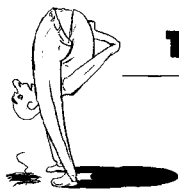
Nixon's intentions are clear, even in Kotowski's skewed telling: the President opposed quotas; he disliked the use of coercion to achieve racial justice; he was deeply committed to meritocratic principles (he wanted no part, he said, of policies that were "anti-ability"); and though he didn't like the term, his ultimate vision was integrationist. The last thing he would have sanctioned was a racially balkanized America, divided into angry ethnic communities. Still, more than any other President, it was Nixon who set the country in precisely that direction. He created the first set-asides, fostered quotas in business and at colleges, used all the muscle of the federal government to enforce these divisive preferences, and encouraged rising separatism among not only blacks but also Native Americans. Didn't he see that his actions were at odds with his principles? It never occurs to Kotowski to ask.

The answer, in part, is that Nixon's team pushed further than he intended

with affirmative action, moving beyond voluntary goals to quotas, and ratcheting up government pressure until it amounted to outright compulsion. In other situations, it seems plain today, the President just didn't understand what kind of fire he was playing with. He didn't grasp the depth of alienation that would give separate black institutions—whether colleges, banks, or businesses—such enduring appeal. Nor (though there were plenty of warnings) did he predict how what he called a "little extra start" would in many instances turn into different standards for blacks and whites. In still other cases Nixon all too often simply failed to follow through. Easily offended by the black leaders he tried to work with, distracted by vote-getting and then by Watergate, in truth, he never saw race relations as a priority. And as a result, he failed to ride herd on many of his own initiatives—or to stop them when they fell afoul of his beliefs.

In the end, then, the story of Nixon and race is, like so much else in Nixon's history, a tragic story. He meant well—much better than most people, then or now, have given him credit for. His iconoclastic ideas were sometimes brilliant and far ahead of their time. But ultimately it's hard to count his civil-rights policy a success. Yes, he transformed the way we see the problem: the economic, results-oriented approach he fashioned reigns supreme even today. But the endless preferences it engendered were hardly true to his principles—and arguably have undermined racial progress. Finally, it's no accident that most readers will be surprised by the news in this volume. Whatever Nixon accomplished in behalf of blacks, he had no idea how to communicate his vision or use the bully pulpit for moral leadership on race issues. Kotowski doesn't get it, but this is a deeply sad book: a story of so much promise and such good ideas largely run aground. ▀

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THE PUZZLER

by EMILY COX and HENRY RATHVON

Compact Disc

In this disc each Radial word 1-20 is to be entered with its letters in mixed order. To fix the positions of these letters, Concentric words are to be entered in rings A-E. The Concentric words are clued in order and proceed clockwise starting from sector 1 in each ring. Some extra music is crammed into this compact disc. That is to say, five Concentric answers (one per ring) and five Radial answers contain one extra letter apiece, so five grid spaces will each need to accommodate two consecutive letters. Taken from ring A inward to ring E, these five pairs of letters identify the musical instrument featured on this disc. Answer lengths are not given for the Radial clues. Six clue answers are capitalized, and the answer to 10 is an uncommon term.

Last month's Puzzler solution is on page 113.

RADIAL

1. Set time kept by composer
2. Lalo has trimmed "Farewell"
3. In a debate, answers puzzle about Beethoven's Fourth
4. Musical notes right for a swinger's catchy line?
5. Organ contains round item that's breathtaking?
6. Idol's acquiring Autry's original spurs
7. Latin jazz master stirred teen up
8. Bit of sexy stuff in "Beat It"
9. Judge tempo right
10. Scale for soprano, as Mom
11. Headed "Jump"
12. Beatle not finished with Kiss singer Annie
13. Take a rest in the middle of dancing facility
14. Jolson's ironclad? Wrong
15. Fats Waller's finale adopted by boys
16. A leader in blues cut short "Over and Over"
17. Composer transposed "Blue Oz"

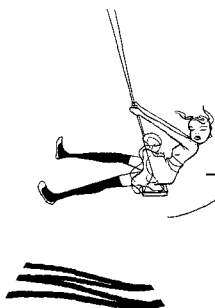
18. Emcee at a square dance returned holding one flower
19. Long locks covering Gluck's head—a hairy problem?
20. Make a harsh sound terrific for an audience

CONCENTRIC

- A. 1. Musical instrument for dope in benefit (7)
2. Massachusetts petitions about Queen's dance events (7)
3. A hit's sound breaks up a Los Angeles country band (7)
- B. 1. Visitor's wild shout about musical transition (10)
2. Soprano Moffo's collecting 50 records (6)
3. Playing bugle is swell (5)
- C. 1. Returned drunk with the Spanish singers (5)

2. A high-pitched voice keeps Em quavering (8)
3. More than cool kind of jazz with brio (8)
- D. 1. Greek drummer's starting group associated with Dylan (3,4)
2. Color of linen for Motley Crue (4)
3. Formerly part of concertos (4)
4. Long-legged flapper changed octave (6)
- E. 1. Guthrie's following 4/4 time with Santana (6)
2. Absurd situations with bovine in marches (9)
3. Child's toy with a rapper's face makes low note? (6)

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, Mass. 02114.



WORD COURT

by BARBARA WALLRAFF

BONNIE LEWELLYN, of Hayward, Calif., writes, "In recent months a puzzling word has reared its head once again: *surveil*. When I first heard it used, a few years ago, I assumed that the speaker was simply coining a new form of the word *surveillance*, as in 'We set up a team to *surveil* the suspect's house.' The correct usage, I assumed, would be 'We set up a team to *survey* the suspect's house.' I see, however, that *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* accepts the word *surveil* as a 'back-formation' of *surveillance*. Are there any other back-formation words in common usage, and are they considered acceptable in standard English?"

Yes, indeed. Back-formations are newer, shorter words created by stripping away affixes (usually endings) from words that entered English with their affixes firmly attached. For instance, *baby-sitter* came to us in that form, and the verb *baby-sit* was derived from it. The verb *diagnose* is derived from *diagnosis*, *donate* from *donation*, and *reminisce* from *reminiscence*. *Surveillance*, of course, entered English from French, about two centuries ago, whereas the earliest citation for *surveil* known to *Webster's Collegiate's* lexicographers is from 1949.

Your reaction to *surveil* is fairly typical of the response people have to a back-formation they aren't used to seeing: they don't quite believe that the thing is a proper word. But *surveil* deserves to be a word, it seems to me, because *survey* threatens to mean a technique of social science or, more likely, land measurement (for instance, here's a recent citation from *The Philadelphia Inquirer*: "One commando killed a soldier whose job was to *surveil* the border ..."). Nonetheless, some other back-formations that were coined long ago have never managed to become standard, even though no exact synonyms are at hand. *Enthuse* is a prime example. Though the word has been in use since before the Civil War, most cur-

rent dictionaries include warnings that it still irritates many people. Ultimately, all we have to go by is our own taste. Does a word irritate *us*? Then we should try to find some other way to make our point. If we can't—well, then we've discovered what the word is for.

DAVID RADWIN, of Berkeley, Calif., writes, "How does one vocalize the quotation marks that begin and end a quotation? Are *quote* and *unquote* correct?"



If you want to get technical, you can say *quote* and *close* (the opposite of *open*, not the opposite of *far*) *quote* instead. Speakers at White House press conferences, congressional committee hearings, and the like frequently use that form. Others say *endquote* or, as it's usually rendered in print, *end quote*. But *quote*, *unquote* is by far the most common pair. Oddly, these words are often said together. For instance, from a February CNN transcript: "... had phone calls made to three—quote unquote—'prominent Indian government officials.'" How the listener is supposed to know where the quotation ends I have no idea.

CARRIE E. COXWELL, of Kent, Ohio, writes, "In a practice book for the ACT Assessment, I came across the following sentence: 'The children have gone

fishing for the day.' I was supposed to say whether or not the sentence was correct. I thought it was. However, the authors of the book said that the sentence was incorrect, because a perfect verb must be followed by an infinitive. I have never heard of this rule, and neither has my English teacher. We combed through Fowler's under every heading we could think of but could find nothing. Does this rule exist?"

Any student and teacher who rush to H. W. Fowler's *Modern English Usage* for answers to their language questions deserve at least a gold star and possibly a medal. If you look under "gerund" in the second edition of Fowler's, you'll find a few paragraphs about "gerund and infinitive" that aren't exactly on point but come pretty close. You'll want to read the whole passage, but the nub of it, I think, comes when Fowler says, "There is very little danger of using the gerund, but much of using the infinitive, where the other would be better." Throw that practice book out!

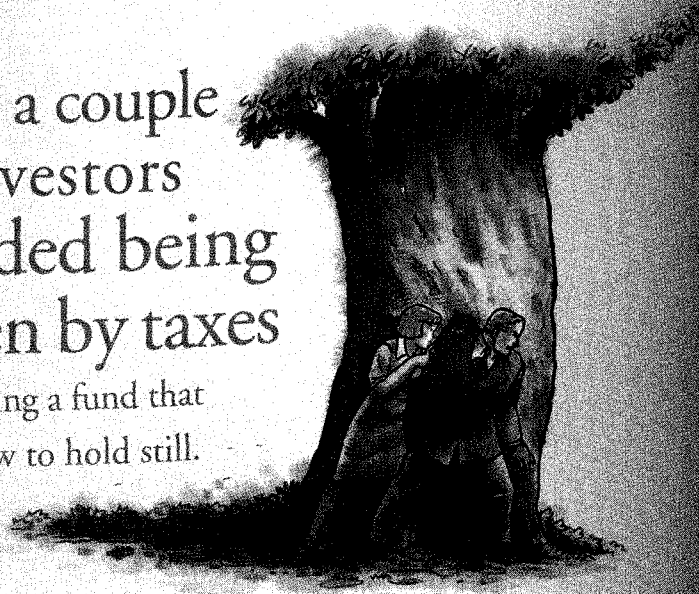
LINDA GARDINER, of Sherborn, Mass., writes, "Where and how did the phrase *one of the only* start turning up? For example, recently I read 'Turkey is *one of the only* Muslim states to have had a female prime minister' in *The Christian Science Monitor*, which should know better. I see the phrase everywhere. Am I one of the only people to have noticed this?"

No, you're not. Those who like to ponder language may enjoy wondering why *the only ones* passes muster while *one of the only* does not. Oh, well. *One of the only* doesn't pass muster. Depending on meaning, choose *the only* or *one of the few* instead.

Do you have a language question or dispute? Write to Word Court in care of The Atlantic Monthly, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, MA 02114, or send e-mail to MsGrammar@theatlantic.com. All letters become the property of Word Court. Ms. Grammar is also on the Web, at www.theatlantic.com/courtrecord.

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